Postwar Iraq (2003-2016): A Postcolonial Grassroots Approach to the Failure of "Democratic Nation-Building"

By

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Abstract

The "democratic nation-building" project implemented in Iraq after the American-led invasion and occupation in 2003 has failed by any measure of the concept. The country is unstable; the central government does not provide social services or security. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) destroyed Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, endangering the very existence of Iraq as a sovereign state. Even worse, Iraqis not only seem to have little to no faith in their governing elites, but increasingly find them culpable in the violence, which has taken over their lives since the invasion of 2003. Iraqi national identity is fragmented along tribal, ethnic, and religious lines due to the sectarianization of the state, which began under the occupation. Finally, the violence has resulted in a refugee crisis but also drastically changed the demographics of Iraq, homogenizing neighbourhoods that were once diverse. This reality on the ground facilitates the question that underlines this study: *why has the "democratic nation-building" project in Iraq failed since the US-led regime change in 2003 until 2016?*

Much of the conventional literature on post-invasion Iraq has focused on the twin concepts of "democratization" and "nation-building." Specifically, this literature sought solutions for the problem of re-building Iraq – as opposed to the problem of the invasion and occupation – and largely focused on endogenous factors such as power-sharing, consociational democracy, "ethnically divided societies," and "sectarianism." In contrast, this dissertation identifies and seeks to address two underdeveloped elements in the literature; first, analyses of post-2003 Iraq have broadly focused on the problem of sectarianism as an impediment to the democratization of Iraq, which implies that Iraqis are inherently unable to live together in one state. This literature has largely, aside from some critical voices, ignored the role played by the invasion, occupation, international and regional politics. Second, these studies on nation-building

have predominantly focused on unrepresentative elites and a top-down approach to democratization. This is problematic because there has not been enough attention paid to Iraqi voices and their visions of democracy. There is also not much attention paid to the fact that US nation-building efforts in 2003, much like their British predecessors following the First World War, have largely excluded representative Iraqis from forging their own political future. Subsequently, this research uses critical postcolonial/decolonial, "history from below," and subaltern approaches. It does so, in part, to demonstrate a reciprocal and dialectical relationship between international and domestic politics in Iraq by problematizing the invasion and occupation. This is achieved through using critical discourse analysis to challenge the top-down, elite-driven model of "democratic" nation-building imposed on post-2003 Iraq. In addition, this research seeks to explore the potential for democratization "from below" by examining Iraqi *articulations* of the state. To that end, I accessed the *Hizb al-Ba'th al- 'Arabi al-Ishtiraki* (Ba'ath Party of Iraq) Collection at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. I also conducted nine semi-structured interviews with Iraqis experts and civil society practitioners in March and April of 2016. These research participants were selected due to their expertise in democratization, Iraq and their direct or indirect involvement with the state-building project in post-2003 Iraq. In addition, I consciously used the work of critical Iraqi scholars to discuss post-2003 Iraq, especially with regards to the violence, the occupation and its legacies and sectarianism to provide a counter-story to the conventional narrative on post-2003 Iraq. Together, this data not only strongly challenges the dominant narrative on post-2003 Iraq but also offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Iraqi society, sectarian relations, and politics.

The major contribution of this research is the inclusion of Iraqi voices and primary materials to understand what went wrong in post-2003 Iraq. One of the biggest lessons Iraq

teaches us is the limitations of a top-down, unrepresentative model of democratization imposed

through a foreign invasion and occupation. This affirms the importance of research that examines

the potential for a bottom-up, grassroots model of democratization.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Mariam Georgis. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "2Postwar Iraq (2003-2014)", No. 00056969, 5/4/15 and Project Name "Postwar Iraq", No. 00060960, 2/3/16.

"You know, as an Iraqi from the time you open your eyes coming into the world until you

die, you see wars."

Rahma Abdul Kareem Abbas, *Voices from Iraq,* 2011

For the everyday Iraqis who have borne the brunt of endless wars and who struggle for

a better future

Acknowledgements

Completing this degree has been a long-held personal goal, which I could not have accomplished without the support, encouragement and knowledge of so many people across different places and spaces throughout my life. I have been fortunate and privileged to think and write about such an important topic to me in a challenging, critical and stimulating environment. I am tremendously grateful for my supervisor, Dr. Mojtaba Mahdavi, for the endless thought-provoking conversations, countless reassurances and support, and for the invaluable feedback during this process. Your critical thought and steadfast commitment to disrupting conventional analysis of the Middle East through your teaching, scholarship and community engagement are inspiring.

My supervisory committee members, Dr. Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Dr. Roger Epp, have offered vital guidance throughout this process, both academically and personally. Yasmeen, I thank you for seriously engaging with my work for the last five years and for strengthening this study with your insightful comments and challenging questions. You pushed me to think more critically and more carefully, which strengthened my work immeasurably. Most importantly, thank you for helping me to navigate the many small and big steps this process necessitates. Roger, thank you for validating my questions and encouraging me to write from my perspective. This helped me write a state-of-the field in IR that served as the foundation for positioning myself in this field as a scholar and for finding my voice. Our many conversations and your feedback and questions were essential to thinking through each stage of this process. Thank you for your generosity, including me in your family celebrations, and for teaching me about stuffing!

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List of Abbreviations

ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
Da'ish	al-*Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham*
GWT	Global War on Terror
US	United States
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
HRW	Human Rights Watch
NSS	National Security Strategy of the United States
IGC	Interim Governing Council
IR	International Relations
SOAS	The School of Oriental and African Studies
OWFI	Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PNAC	Project for a New American Century
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
UK	United Kingdom

SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
WIFAQ	Iraq National Accord
INC	Iraqi National Congress
YPG	People's Protection Unit
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party

Introduction

> In adherence to even the most basic understanding of liberty,
> neither the conditions of democracy nor liberty can be forcibly applied
> from above but, rather, must be arrived at through the development
> and accessibility of civil society.
>
> **Ismael and Haddad, *Iraq: The Human Cost of History*, 2004.**

0.1 Introduction

Thirteen years of "democratic nation-building" following the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 have failed by any measure of the concept. Iraq exhibits no signs of a functioning democracy. The central government does not function in terms of providing services or security. Ordinary people are victims of everyday violence. Structural violence has created conflicts along religious, cultural, and ethnic lines. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (also known as ISIS[1] or ISIL[2] and *Da'ish*[3]) has destroyed Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, endangering the very existence of Iraq as a sovereign nation-state. Even worse, Iraqis not only seem to have little to no faith in their governing elites, but increasingly find them culpable in the violence, which has taken over their lives since the invasion in 2003. Ethnic and sectarian strife continues in the governing structure and social fabric of the country. In fragments, Iraqi identity has regressed towards tribal affiliations not seen since the creation of the modern state of Iraq. Finally, as of July 2016, there are a reported 230,000 Iraqi refugees in the region as well as 3.4 million internally displaced persons since January 2014 (87,000 from Fallujah and surrounding areas, 34,000 from Mosul and surrounding areas, and 25,284 from Shirqat and surrounding areas).[4]

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[1] Islamic State of Iraq and Syria also known as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (the Arabic word for Levant).
[2] Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.
[3] In Arabic, the group is known as *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa al-Sham* (*Da'ish*).
[4] UNHCR, "Iraq Flash Update," 2016.

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks and the subsequent discourse of the "Global War on Terror" (GWT), the administration of then-United States President George W. Bush and the mainstream media exploited the confusion, fear and anger and portrayed the GWT as a "Just War" against "freedom-hating, barbaric Islamic fundamentalists."[5] In various speeches made by President Bush, the dichotomy between "us" and "them" was used to call on Americans and other members of the international community to support the Global War on Terror.[6] The invasion of Iraq took place within this context in March of 2003. Specifically, Bush cited "weapons of mass destruction," "the safety of the free world," and "liberating the Iraqi people and bringing them democracy" as the reasons for the invasion.[7] Subsequently, the United States (US), backed by a "coalition of the willing," began *Operation Iraqi Freedom* without United Nations (UN) support, despite their efforts to elicit a United Nation Security Council (UNSC) Resolution. The fall of Saddam Hussein was swift. However, many Iraqis, especially outside of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), vehemently opposed the illegal occupation and ensuing policies.[8]

An Iraqi resistance, or what was labelled an insurgency by the Coalition, began shortly after the invasion in response to foreign occupation, illegitimate "representatives" backed by the US to form the Coalition Government, and perceived exclusive political processes.[9] The period following the invasion was chaotic due to several reasons. On May 23, 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issued Order Two, which dissolved the army, the navy, the air

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[5] These references can be found in the speeches made by President George W. Bush during the lead up to the invasion of Iraq. I conduct a discourse analysis of these speeches in chapter three.

[6] See Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2001, 2002, 2003.

[7] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2003.

[8] This sentiment was consistently conveyed by the research participants. The analysis of these interviews is the subject of chapter four.

[9] The term insurgent much like the term terrorist, is problematic; its application in this context enabled the use of indiscriminate and oftentimes, lethal force against Iraqis resisting occupation, a right enshrined in international law. See Saeed, *Hqooq al insan khilal al ihtilal* (The Rights of Man Under Occupation), 2010.

defence force, the air force, and the ministry of defence.[10] This left Baghdad and other cities

without a police force so that,

> criminals acted with impunity, and militias set up shop in the
> middle of the street, terrorizing the local population in broad
> daylight. The electrical grid and oil pipelines were constantly
> targeted by saboteurs. The smuggling of oil in the south was a
> growing business and funds were used to finance the purchase of
> arms, further increasing violence on the streets. For years, there
> was no one to challenge criminals and terrorists. [11]

There is an important difference between the genuine local *Iraqi* resistance to the occupation and

the criminal, militant and foreign violence by groups such as Al Qaeda, which entered Iraq

following this security vacuum created by the Anglo-American occupation in 2003. I discuss the

rise of Al Qaeda in Iraq and later, ISIS in chapter four. With regards to the Iraqi resistance, Iraqi

scholar, Fanar Haddad points to two dynamics: first, a *typical* nationalist response to foreign

control and second, a "reaction to the coercive practices of the occupation, including military,

policing and penal operations."[12] While I discuss the effects of collective punishments and

detention of Iraqis in prisons such as Abu Ghraib or Bucca in chapter four, here I highlight

certain instances of violence that contributed to the chaos during this period.

The first instance is the violence in Fallujah. Five days after the Anglo-American forces

arrived in April 2003, a "demonstration calling for the soldiers to leave, including from a school

building they were occupying, turned violent."[13] Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that

according to protestors, US soldiers opened fire without provocation, killing "seventeen people

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[10] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future: How Corruption, Incompetence and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy,* 69.
[11] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 73.
[12] Haddad, "The Terrorists of Today are the Heroes of Tomorrow: The Anti-British and Anti-American Insurgencies in Iraqi History," 465.
[13] Hamourtziadou, "Besieged: Living and Dying in Fallujah," 2016.

and wounding more than seventy."[14] A protest two days later resulted in a US military convoy opening fire and killing "three persons and wounding another sixteen." [15] While the facts of these two events were contested by both sides, the HRW concluded in their report that "witness testimony and ballistics evidence suggest that U.S. troops responded with excessive force to a *perceived* threat."[16] This disproportionate or excessive use of force on the part of the American military served to intensify the resentment and opposition to the occupation by Iraqis.[17]

The First Battle of Fallujah, *Operation Vigilant Resolve,* aimed to "root out extremist elements of Fallujah and was an act of retaliation for the killing of four US contractors in April 2004."[18] In response to the ambush on the convoy, which killed four American private militant contractors, American forces "launched a major assault" that resulted in eight hundred fatalities, approximately six hundred and sixteen of which were *civilians* and three hundred being women and children.[19] The Second Battle of Fallujah, *Operation Al-Fajr* and *Operation Phantom Fury* was a combined offensive, which included American, Iraqi and British forces in November and December of 2004.[20] While the intended targets of this operation were "insurgents who are said to be under the control of Abu-Mussab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian terrorist wanted by the Iraqi government,"[21] the IRIN, a UN humanitarian news agency, reported that of the seven hundred bodies recovered, five hundred and fifty were women and children.[22] Ultimately, the US military "almost levelled the city and faced accusations of using non-conventional weapons as it deployed

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[14] Human Rights Watch, "Violence Response: The U.S. Army in al-Falluja," 2003.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Human Rights Watch, "Violence Response: The U.S. Army in al-Falluja," 2003. Emphasis added.
[17] All the research participants made this point when discussing the occupation and their resistance.
[18] Hamourtziadou, "Besieged: Living and Dying in Fallujah," 2016.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] IRIN, "Death Toll in Fallujah Rising, Doctors say," 2005.
[22] Ibid.

tens of thousands of Marine Corps personnel."[23] Conventional news reports conveyed these battles in Fallujah in sectarian terms, as a Sunni insurrection against the Shi'a government.[24] However, critical scholars such as Zaid Al-Ali who was on the ground in Iraq, recognized the sectarian nature of the armed militias but maintained that the uprisings in Fallujah (and Najaf) in 2004 against the US forces actually involved the "collaboration between the two sides of the community."[25]

In sum, post-2003 Iraq has been characterized by periods of intense violence, the most recent of which started in June 2014 when the Islamic State captured Iraq's northern city of Mosul. These periods of intense violence have served to break down the abilities of the Iraqi state to function. Moreover, the resulting internal displacement has drastically changed the demographics of cities and towns and overwhelmed the capacities of institutions and organizations to respond to the humanitarian crisis. More importantly, these periods of intense violence also have a disastrous effect on the people, especially indigenous and other vulnerable minorities, as they leave their cities in large numbers. Tom Watson writes, "it is hard not to conclude that the murderous activities of Islamic State (ISIS) constitutes an act of genocide against the Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac Christian and Yazidi peoples of Iraq according to Article Two of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)."[26] In the mountains of the Sinjar region, up to 250,000 Yazidis were trapped at the hands of ISIS. Regarding the Assyrian Christians, Savina Dawood reported from Arbil, Iraq, "there are thousands of refugees in our town [Arbil], living in the public park or church yards. They have been forced to leave their homes and have nothing with them. Their situation is really desperate.

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[23] Al Saleh, "Fallujah: Iraq's Bastion of Sunni Arab Dissent," 2016.
[24] See BBC News, "Iraq's Hardest Fight: The US Battle for Falluja 2004," 2014.
[25] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 103.
[26] Watson, "Those Families in Iraq Fleeing in Terror from ISIS Killers – They are our Problem," 2014.

Some have witnessed some terrible things, beheadings, crucifixions and have seen family members killed."[27]

The rise of ISIS saw the resurgence of the adage of "Muslim and/or Arab Exceptionalism" to democracy by much of mainstream Western media, political analysts and political elites.[28] The terrorist actions of ISIS in the region served as confirmation of Iraqis' cultural or religious backwardness, and their inability to transition peacefully to liberal democracy. The problematic idea that Sunnis happily welcomed ISIS into Mosul contributed to the ascendancy of another simplistic discourse about Iraq – namely, that the "nation" should be defined and characterized along its *primordial* "religious and ethnic sectarian" identities and it must be divided into multiple religious/ethnic political units.[29]

Critical analyses of this event counter this story and complicate the dominant but problematic narrative of sectarianism. Various Middle East[30] and Iraqi experts largely attributed the rise of the Islamic State and the ensuing "sectarian" violence in the region to the Anglo-American occupation and in turn, the failure of the former Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki to integrate all components of Iraqi society into a national Iraqi state.[31] Moreover, these critical voices this study draws on argued that religious and ethnic "sectarianism" is not inherent to Iraqi

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[27] Rockett, "Desperate Christians in Iraq Beg UK and US to Send in Troops," 2014.

[28] I elaborate on this in chapter four, which focuses on the regional factors in post-2003 Iraq and the emergence of ISIS.

[29] See Chmaytelli and Coles, "Post-Islamic State Iraq should be Split in Three: Top Kurdish Official," 2016; Altman, "Dividing Iraq Into Three Regions May Be Best Path to Peace," 2015; Matishak, "Dem Senator: Iraq Should be Split into Three States," 2015; Alaaldin, "If Iraq is to Survive, Then it Bust be Divided into Separate Regions," 2014; Nuri, "Why It's Time for Iraq to Split into Three Countries," 2014; Choksy and Choksy, "Defeat ISIS, but Let Iraq Split," 2014.

[30] *Middle East* is used throughout this work to refer to this region for the purpose of coherence/intelligibility. I recognize this label as both Orientalist and a product of colonial modernity wherein West Asia is called the Near East or Middle East in relation to Europe or from the European point of reference.

[31] For a critical discussion on the emergence of ISIS, see: Gerges, *ISIS: A History,* 2016; Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about Islamic State," 2015; Alnasseri, "ISIS Fills Power Vacuum in Iraq Fundamentally Created by U.S. Foreign Policy," 2014; Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014; Prashad, "The Geopolitics of the Islamic State," 2014.

society but rather, it is a consequence of the structural violence, meaning the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Hence, the solution is not the division of the country along its ethnic/religious identities. As Cockburn argues, Iraq cannot be divided peacefully;[32] almost all of Iraq's cities are diverse, despite pockets of homogeneity. While the demographics of Iraqi cities have changed due to the large-scale violence that has characterized post-2003 Iraq, historically Iraqi cities, such as Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, Samarra, and Kirkuk have been ethnically and religiously diverse.[33] Even the north of Iraq, which is conventionally perceived as homogenously Kurdish, is home to various ethno-religious minorities such as Assyrians, Turkomans, Arabs and Armenians.[34]

Still, other critical scholars such as Mahdavi,[35] Abu-Rabi',[36] and Bayat[37] have dug deeper and argued that Islamism as a political and social phenomenon is a response to modern European/Western colonialism in the Middle East. This is by no means a justification of the actions of ISIS or a discounting of agency on the part of these individuals; however, an analysis of ISIS is incomplete without the wider context of colonial modernity and its implications in the region. More specifically, ISIS is a symptom of the destruction of the Iraqi state resulting from the Anglo-American invasion and occupation; its eradication as an entity and ideology requires substantial and concrete long-term solutions aimed at reversing the damaging legacies of the occupation and its policies.

Much of the literature on post-invasion Iraq has focused on the twin concepts of "democratization and nation-building."[38] Specifically, this literature begins with solutions or strategies for "re-building" Iraq as opposed to the invasion itself and largely focuses on elites,

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[32] Cockburn, "Crisis in the Middle East: The End of a Country, and the Start of a New Dark Age," 2014.
[33] See Ramadani, "The Sectarian Myth of Iraq," 2014.
[34] O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History, Future Prospects," 2002.
[35] Mahdavi, "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?" 2013.
[36] Abu Rabi', *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam,* 2010.
[37] Bayat, *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam,* 2013.
[38] A detailed footnote of this literature is provided in chapter one.

power-sharing, consociational democracy, ethnically divided societies, and sectarianism. This study identifies two underdeveloped elements in this literature:

1. Analyses of recent events in Iraq and of post-2003 Iraqi politics broadly have focused on the concept of "sectarianism," which implies that Iraqis are unable to work together to build their own democracy.[39] This literature has largely, aside from some critical voices,[40] ignored the role played by the occupation, international and regional politics.

2. Studies on nation-building in postwar Iraq focus largely on unrepresentative elites and a top-down approach to democratization.[41] This is problematic because there has not been enough attention paid to Iraqi voices and their vision of "democracy." In this literature, there is not much attention paid to the fact that US nation-building efforts in 2003, much like their British predecessors, have largely excluded representative Iraqis from forging their own political future.

The first underdeveloped element is important for several reasons, two of which I highlight for the purpose of this study. One is the prevalence of the Orientalist[42] discourse of "Arab Exceptionalism."[43] Iliya Harik argues, "Arabic speaking peoples are divided ethnically, culturally, and politically…In fact, each individual Arab state has had a distinct identity based on separate origin, political history, and extreme variance in per capita income, in ethnic mix, social

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[39] A detailed footnote of this literature is provided in chapter one.
[40] A detailed footnote of this literature is provided in chapter one.
[41] A detailed footnote of this literature is provided in chapter one.
[42] See Said, *Orientalism,* 1978. He discusses how the Middle East was/is studied through a parochial, Western-centric, limited, and essentialist way to produce its inferiority (and in turn, superiority) of the "West" as hegemon.
[43] I am referring to the idea that Arab values, culture, traditions etc. are inimical to democratic development. See Freedom House Report, "Freedom in the World 2001," 2001; Karatnycky, "The 2001 Freedom House Survey: Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," 2002; Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism," 2002; Stepan and Robertson, "An 'Arab' more than a 'Muslim' Democracy Gap," 2003; Stepan and Robertson, "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," 2004; Lakoff, "The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism," 2004; Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World,* 2016.

norms, educational systems, and in many cases, religious distinctiveness."[44] As such, to better understand the case of post-invasion Iraq, we need to problematize the essentialist assertion of "Arab Exceptionalism" and instead, begin with a critical analysis of the dynamic between global, regional and domestic power. For example, ignoring regional actors misses salient contributing factors. Vijay Prashad argues,

> there was no policy direction, no demand that Gulf Arabs cease their private support for the group [of the Islamic State, or IS], and no recognition that a regional solution (that includes Syria) is needed to stem the tide of the IS. The Saudi Kingdom shares with IS its antipathy to Iran and to Shiism, and the Kingdom seems willing to allow IS to run riot through Iraq's diversity to suit Saudi Arabia's regional ambitions.[45]

The role of regional and international powers in understanding the emergence and success of ISIS can be applied to understanding post-2003 Iraq in general. As such, the body of this dissertation serves to highlight and extricate the interplay between the "international," "regional," and "domestic" in order to understand what "went wrong" in Iraq. By focusing on the way in which power operates in each of these centers as well as the margins, a more comprehensive story of post-2003 Iraq emerges. That is, I am interested in contributing to the critical literature on the topic by analyzing the root causes of the problem; by critically analyzing the structural violence of colonial nation-building through examining the invasion and occupation policies, we can challenge the problematic notion of "sectarianism" as a primordial factor and a cultural obstacle to democratization in Iraq.

The second underemphasized element is important because the literature on post-war Iraq has largely focused on the "power blocs" and ruling elites. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the experiences, needs, civil activism and resistance of the marginalized and the

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[44] Harik, "Democracy, 'Arab Exceptionalism,' and Social Science," 682.
[45] Prashad, "Metastasis of the Islamic State," 2014.

"subaltern" of Iraqi society. The focus on elites at the expense of the subaltern is problematic because the former arguably are more interested in maintaining political power than working together to build a cohesive, equitable and democratic state.[46] In the case of Iraq, this issue was compounded because the elites tasked with rebuilding Iraq were largely unrepresentative of Iraqis as they were, with some exceptions, mostly exiles with no social base of support. Moreover, I argue that both British (1920-1932) and American nation-building efforts post-2003 were embedded within a specific set of colonial assumptions. That is, both believed they were working from scratch with the underlying idea that Iraqis were inherently incapable of forging their own political future, which is why they were relatively excluded from the nation-building process. I am not suggesting that these two instances of "nation-building" are the same or that they had the same objectives; they did not. I am emphasizing the continuity between colonial and neo-colonial practices in both instances and pointing to the way in which Iraqis were not included in the process of building their state or forging their political life.

0.2 Research Problem

This research problematizes the failure of democratic nation-building in post-war Iraq (2003-2016). It focuses, first, on identifying the reasons for the failure of the democratic nation-building process in post-2003 Iraq and second, including the marginalized Iraqi voices and perspectives on the current political situation. Scholarly work engaged in providing proposals for Iraq's transition to democracy largely focuses on the question of federalism. This literature is divided between those who favour federalism along ethno-religious lines (consociational

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[46] For a discussion on the power politics between political elites in Iraq, see Younis, "Iraq is Left in a Sectarian Rut After the Elite's Horse trading," 2010; Raphaeli, "Iraqi Government in Crisis-Sectarianism, Corruption and Dissent," 2011; Mardini and Sky, "Maliki's Democratic Farce," 2013; Al-Kadhimi, "Sectarian Discourse Dominates Iraqi Election Politic," 2014.

democracy), mainly between the Arabs and Kurds,[47] or federalism based on the division of Iraq administratively (integrationists) to minimize ethno-religious conflict.[48] Relatedly, the scholarship on power-sharing also focuses on the division of economic, political and social power between the three dominant groups, the Sunni Arabs, the Shi'a Arabs, and the Kurds.[49]

Other scholars' proposals for democracy focus on conflict resolution mechanisms to ensure that all of Iraq's major groups have an economic stake in the system and stress the absolute necessity of including conflict resolution mechanisms and institutions between Iraq's ethnic and religious communities. [50] For some scholars, the role of economics and especially, oil was the main factor for the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq.[51] While this literature offers explanations of the factors impeding the democratization of Iraq, it does not *fully* capture obstacles to democracy posed by occupying forces of the US or the political system they installed. However, critical scholars draw our attention to the role and legacy of the US occupation in fuelling and entrenching the Iraqi state as sectarian, rather than a national and unified state. [52]

In short, the conventional literature on post-war Iraq has predominantly been concerned with the violent tensions between ethno-religious groups,[53] "power blocs" or a top-down process of democratization. This has generally involved the construction of a particular narrative of the history of the modern state of Iraq and its society. There has been relatively less attention devoted to colonial legacies and more importantly, the potential for Iraqis to conceptualize and

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[47] For a discussion on consociational democracy model, see chapter one.
[48] For a discussion on the integrationist model of federalism, see chapter one.
[49] For a discussion on power-sharing, see chapter one.
[50] For a discussion on conflict resolution, see chapter one.
[51] For a discussion on the role of oil and economics in the invasion and occupation, see chapter one.
[52] For a discussion on the impact of the Anglo-American invasion and occupation, see chapter one.
[53] It is important to emphasize that the groups or sects emphasized and studied are almost always the majority. There has been little regard for the non-elites in these "big" groups and there has been even less attention on vulnerable minorities whose fate has largely been extermination or expulsion in post-2003 Iraq.

materialize their own political future and their own democracy. This doctoral study is an attempt to address and problematize this underdeveloped aspect of post-2003 Iraq. My research project seeks to engage with and build on the emerging critical literature on post-invasion Iraq in two ways. First, it demonstrates a reciprocal and dialectical relationship between international and domestic politics in Iraq; in other words, it examines and problematizes the impact of the American-led invasion as well as regional powers' influence on domestic politics in post-Saddam Iraq. Second, it seeks to include Iraqi perspectives on the current political crisis and possible alternatives to the current top-down models of democratic nation-building. Accordingly, a critical postcolonial/decolonial approach and Subaltern Studies/history from below offers a useful critical lens and theoretical framework for the case study of post-invasion Iraq.

This study focuses on the historical period between 2003 and 2016 because this period includes the invasion, occupation and the foundational consolidation period of the sectarian political system installed. It marks a shift in the international system and Iraqi politics affected by a new colonial discourse of "democratic nation-building" while simultaneously demonstrating continuity in the colonial and foreign intervention in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq.

0.3 Research Question(s)

My purpose in this single case study is to first, explore why post-2003 Iraq has not transitioned to a functioning and stable democracy following the regime change and "democratic nation-building." More specifically, this study examines the failure of the Iraqi government to function and its related problems such as the rise of ISIS, the lack of national cohesion, the persistent ethnic and sectarian tension and violence, as well as the related issues of the massive

refugee and internally displaced persons. Second, this study is an attempt to explore *Iraqi articulations* of why Iraq has not democratized.

The central question of this study, therefore, is, *why has the "democratic nation-building" project in Iraq failed since the US-led regime change in 2003 until 2016?* Related to this main question, I also examine the following interrelated questions: a) in what ways has the US invasion and occupation facilitated or exacerbated conditions that have given rise to sectarianism, violence, dysfunctional government and movements like Al Qaeda-Iraq or ISIS? and b) were there elements of grassroots Iraqi-led state building in 2003? Are these elements still present in Iraq?

0.4 Research Design Overview

A comprehensive understanding of Iraqi politics requires regional and international analyses – not only domestic. A focus on the domestic politics of Iraq is incomplete because states are not autonomous actors in the system. The international system is interconnected; more importantly, the structure of the system, characterized by an unequal distribution of power and wealth, dictates to some extent the domestic politics of states.[54] This is especially evident in the case of Iraq because Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath regime were not removed by Iraqis but through an invasion and occupation by a world hegemon, the United States, as part of its Global War on Terror. This also requires an analysis of US-Iraq relations pre-2003 because arguably, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a continuation of earlier policies: in *Operation Desert Storm* (16 January 1991 – 28 February 1991), a combined air, land and sea assault, claimed the lives of 60,000 to 200,000 Iraqi soldiers and an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Iraqi civilians, referred to

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[54] See Mahdavi, "Post-Revolutionary Iran: Resisting Global and Regional Hegemony," 141-173.

as "collateral damage" in US military briefs, with the dropping of 85,000 tonnes of "smart" bombs in the six-week air campaign.[55] The impact of this War was evaluated by a special United Nations mission to Iraq as wreaking "near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for sometime to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age…"[56] United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 and subsequent sanctions resolutions created a "set of conditions which virtually cut Iraq off from the world economy."[57] This effectively reduced the majority of Iraqis to "survival mode" and claimed the lives of an estimated 1.5 million people, including more than 500,000 children.[58] The March 1991 report by a United Nations mission led by UN Under Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari depicted the situation in Iraq as an "imminent catastrophe, which could include epidemic and famine if massive, life-supporting needs are not rapidly met."[59] It is important to look at previous instances of violence against Iraq; discounting historical instances of the use of military force (violence) by the world hegemon is a form of epistemic violence.

In sum, this study discards the conventional narrative, which identifies the "problem" with Iraq as solely *Iraqi*; the levels of analysis for this case study are thus, threefold: I examine the international, regional and domestic politics of Iraq in order to answer my research question(s). The data gathered for this research has paid special attention to Arabic sources or

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[55] BBC News, "Flashback: 1991 Gulf War," 2003.

[56] UNSC, "Report to the Secretary-General on Humanitarian Needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the Immediate Post-Crisis Environment," 1991. This report was produced as result of a mission to the area led by Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, dated 20 March 1991.

[57] Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000," 208.

[58] Ibid., 214.

[59] UNSC, "Report to the Secretary-General on Humanitarian Needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the Immediate Post-Crisis Environment," 1991.

material in Arabic where possible. I have also relied on the work of critical Iraqi scholars and interviewed Iraqi intellectuals and elites involved in the nation-building process post-2003 in order to identify Iraqi perspectives of nation-building, the political situation in post-2003 Iraq, and potential political futures for Iraq.

0.5 Contribution, Scope, and Limitations of Study

This study contributes to active debates in political science on Iraq's political future and its transition to a stable democracy. It also contributes to wider theoretical and empirical studies on post-war reconstruction, conflict resolution, democratic nation-building and democratization with an emphasis on Iraqi sources. There is a growing body of literature that is similar to this approach; this study contributes to this emerging literature on the critical study of post-war Iraq. The conventional literature on post-invasion Iraq is primarily focused on the role of the political elites, a top-down process of democratization and nation-building and elite factional politics. This has sometimes led to foreign policies, which fund, train and work closely with major factions' leaders at the expense of exploring the potential for grassroots *Iraqi* enunciations/ideas of democratization and nation-building.[60] In addition, the conventional literature has not fully included Iraqi perspectives on the invasion, occupation and its nation-building policies, and Iraq's current political and social situation. While I was not able to travel to Iraq for security

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[60] This study acknowledges the potentially regressive elements of populist politics such as in the case of right-wing populist movements like Nazis in Germany, the National Front political party in France, Freedom Party of Austria, Hungary's governing coalition under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the United States' Tea Party or the politics of Donald Trump. However, this study is using grassroots not in terms of populism, but to denote a representative or Iraq-led model of state-building, which has not taken place in post-2003 Iraq. As chapter four argues, the Interim Governing Council, was comprised largely of exiles who were not elected by the people. This study is problematizing the unrepresentative nature of this body, which served as the foundation for future Iraqi governments. Waves of protests in post-2003 Iraq, which are discussed in chapter four and five, demonstrate the Iraqi people's desires for *progressive* change such as moving beyond sectarianism, representative ruling elites, security, services, pluralism and anti-corruption.

reasons, this work consciously relies heavily on scholars from the Global South,[61] particularly Iraqi scholarship as well as archival work collected at the Hoover Institute, Stanford University where I accessed primary sources in Arabic, as well as semi-structured interviews conducted through Skype with Iraqi experts and leading civil society organizations. The goal is to provide an alternative perspective that challenges the conventional story of post-2003 Iraq as it was written and made "universal" by the winners and victors.

As will be discussed in chapter one, the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are critical postcolonial/decolonial and Subaltern/history from below. Three interrelated elements of this framework are important to highlight: subjectivity and the process of *othering;* the relationship between colonialism and knowledge/representation; and modes of resistance. The most frequently cited work in the literature regarding the relationship between the western Self and its Other and their mutual constitution is Edward Said's *Orientalism.* This work helps us think about the way in which the Orient has shaped the identity of the West as its "contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience."[62] The work of decoloniality scholars builds on this concept by emphasizing and deconstructing the relationship between coloniality and knowledge. For Mignolo, the geopolitics of knowledge asks who, when, why and where knowledge is generated, reflecting a more critical examination of the process of knowledge production.[63] These questions are pivotal because they allow us to turn "Descartes' dictum inside out"; instead of assuming that thinking comes before *being*, we can assume that it is a *racially marked body in*

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[61] For the purposes of this work, I am using the term Global South as a conceptual tool to highlight the "economic, political, and epistemic dependency and unequal relations in the global world order, from a subaltern perspective" (Mignolo, "The Global South and World Dis/Order," 166). Moreover, this concept is also used refer to people who share a similar experience of colonization and the effects of an unequal distribution of wealth globally who may be located within what is labelled as the "First World" or the Global North and underdeveloped or what is labelled as the Third World (Mignolo, "The Global South and World Dis/Order," 184).

[62] Said, *Orientalism,* 2.

[63] Mignolo, "Epistemic, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 160.

a geo-historically marked space that speaks.[64] This understanding is useful in deconstructing the Eurocentric epistemology of both realist and liberal theoretical approaches to international politics. Lastly, this approach is inextricably intertwined with a political project of resistance. For Mignolo, resistance is a call to *de-link*, meaning "to change the *terms* and not just the *content* of the conversation."[65] Likewise Robbie Shilliam calls us to "undermine the security of an epistemological cartography that confines knowledge production to one geo-cultural site."[66]

Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches complement postcolonial/decolonial thought well, especially in terms of providing templates of *how* to undertake work that shifts the geo-cultural "site" of knowledge production. That is, Subaltern Studies is concerned with shifting the focus "downwards"[67] to uncover the politics on the ground. Drawing on volumes such as *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* edited by Stephanie Cronin and *Arab Revolutions and Beyond: The Middle East and Reverberations in the Americas* edited by Sabah Alnasseri, I am arguing that an emphasis on the ground means to look at the multiple and often competing social forces and their demands or interests. In the case of post-2003 Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority relied heavily on exiles who were out of touch with Iraqi society and politics and installed a quota system based on sect in an erroneous attempt to be inclusive. That is, rather than a political process that included negotiations, compromises and debates among various and competing interests, post-2003 Iraq was an instance of an imperial intervention to remove the Ba'ath regime compounded by a foreign occupation that worked to supress Iraqi resistance.

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[64] Mignolo, "Epistemic, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 160.
[65] Mignolo, "De-linking," 459.
[66] Shilliam, "The Perilous but Unavoidable Terrain of the Non-West," 24.
[67] Cronin, *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa,* 2008.

A Subaltern/history from below theoretical perspective is applied in this study to provide an alternative to the foreign-imposed, top-down model of "democratic nation-building" by drawing on primary sources and Iraqi experts and intellectuals. Western academics and political analysts have offered their perspectives on "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq. Often, as will be discussed in chapter one, these perspectives have been based on a limited or *Orientalist* understanding of Iraqi society and politics. This research, in contrast, builds on the critical literature to offer an analysis shaped by a focus on ordinary Iraqi peoples' lives. By highlighting Iraqi articulations of the narrative on Iraq, this research is potentially an instance of critical resistance as it produces knowledge partially from the Global South – a geo-historically, racialized space.

In sum, the decoloniality literature invites us to consider the way in which knowledge is situated – that all perspectives come from *somewhere.*[68] My perspective is *particular* and *fragmented* along multiple locations, histories and languages. Gloria Anzaldua talks about borderlands consciousness wherein our identities and values are developed across multiple and contradictory social and physical spaces, reflecting both dominant and subordinate social and political positions.[69] My borderlands consciousness has been shaped by my inhabiting multiple and contradictory, subordinate and dominant social and physical spaces: my suppressed identity and marginalized experiences as an indigenous person in Iraq, a refugee in the 1990s, an immigrant and a settler, an activist, a woman, my location within the poor working class, a doctoral student in a country in the Global North, and multiple languages.[70] These sources have

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[68] See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2012*;* Haraway, "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," 1988; Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking,* 2012; Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," 1981.
[69] Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* 1987.
[70] My native languages are Neo-Aramaic (Assyrian) and Arabic. There is a tenuous relationship between these two languages. My father's mother tongue is Assyrian as he was born and raised in a village in the north of Iraq. My

also shaped my understanding of the political and my inclination towards theoretical perspectives informed by similar positions. Paulo Freire writes, "I am not impartial or objective; not a fixed observer of facts and happenings."[71] This research reflects the same spirit. The war on Iraq in 2003 is personal and embedded within a family history of violence; my earliest memories of my country of origin involve the sounds of war. Much of the vicarious trauma I encountered while writing this dissertation was very much interlinked with my own lived trauma as an Iraqi child in the mid-1980s and 90s. This is layered by the Assyrian community's intergenerational trauma due to marginalization, erasure, persecution and dispossession from our ancestral homelands.

The theoretical perspectives I have chosen to use in this work are also a reflection of, and inextricably linked to, my perspective. My commitment to engaging seriously with Ramon Grosfoguel's concept of *loci of enunciation* and specifically, to shift our perspective from the *state* to that of *people* [72] is linked to my politics. Like Freire, I am not interested in neutrality or objectivity; my focus on human suffering and the impact of this war on the lives of everyday Iraqis is underlined by my normative position. In large part, this was fuelled by a desire to epistemically undo the damage caused by the currently taken-for-granted understandings of post-2003 Iraq. An example of this is the seeming "naturalness" of viewing Iraqis as "sectarian" or "violent" or labelling them as "insurgent" or "terrorist." While a sole focus on language is both limited and problematic, the relation between labels and policies cannot be dismissed. That is, these dehumanizing labels allowed the US military to use indiscriminate force – lethal force – on

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mother's native tongue is Arabic, having been born and raised in Mosul by a father who was a survivor of *Seyfo* (the Assyrian word for the Ottoman genocide of the Assyrians) and feared being anything but a "Christian Arab" in Iraq. While Assyrians who are born and raised in Iraq are mostly bilingual, there is always a contentious relationship to the Arabic language because they see it as a mechanism of cultural genocide and erasure of their identity and language. I was born and raised in Baghdad until my family fled Iraq in 1993 after the Gulf War. I was a refugee in Turkey until I arrived in Canada, where I learned English.

[71] Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 3.

[72] Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms," 2007.

Iraqi bodies in their quest for "security" or "democracy." An emphasis on people and their suffering can potentially bring back into "focus" the *political*; rather than getting tangled up in technocratic speak of "smart bombs" and "collateral damage," we can focus on neo-colonial violent policies of a foreign occupation, which was inherently incapable of "democratizing" post-Saddam Iraq.

As a native of Iraq and a native Arabic speaker, I have access to primary sources through which to tell Iraq's story predominantly through Iraqi voices. While I cannot and do not represent all of Iraq or all Iraqis, this access means that I have a nuanced insight into Iraqi society, history and politics. It is this "Iraqi" insight which fuelled my desire to respond to the conventional narrative of post-2003 Iraqi politics and society. Critical Iraqi scholars, whose work I rely on in this study to theorize and tell Iraq's story, as well as Iraqi activists and experts, can arguably offer an anticolonial, situated, and in turn, more accurate understanding of the war on Iraq. The universalized neoliberal model of "democratic nation-building" imposed on Iraq is not only dangerous, it has failed. Installing a one-size-fits-all version of democracy cannot continue as standard practice. The so-called universal democratization model imposed on Iraq should not be the solution for other seemingly similar situations or contexts. Democratization and other concepts, ideas and systems are not *naturally* universal; there are very specific and particular politics and policies, which have come into play in order to make them so. In critiquing "universality," and "universal knowledge" it is only appropriate that I make visible the specific and particularities of my politics and knowledge, which have inevitably been part and parcel of conducting this research. Paulo Freire posits that "whoever really observes, does so from a given point of view. And this does not necessarily mean that the observer's position is erroneous."[73]

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[73] Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom,* 3.

Echoing this position, I cannot claim to ever having been impartial or an objective observer of the war on Iraq. This war has been personal not only because I come from these places but because the destruction of lives must always be *personal.* In short, I am not objective, but my personal commitment to justice and fairness never stopped me from conducting rigorous research. Quite the opposite, it always motivated me to think critically, research carefully, and reflect honestly.

0.6 Organization of Dissertation

The following chapters attempt to tell the story of post-2003 Iraq from a critical postcolonial perspective in order to understand "what went wrong." *Chapter One* outlines a literature review of both the conventional and critical scholarship in the context of my research question. It also provides the theoretical framework underpinning this research and methodologies used to carry it out. This study uses three interrelated methods of critical discourse analysis, archival research, and semi-structured interviews with Iraqi experts and civil society practitioners. Except for two, all the research participants were on the ground during the occupation. While they are community leaders and civil society activists, they are not privileged elites who were removed from the violence and everyday experiences of Iraqis. More importantly, subalternity is relational; the selected research participants are *subalterns* in comparison to the occupying forces who were making decisions on how to rebuild Iraq and to the exiles who were selected by the occupying forces to rule post-2003 Iraq. It is difficult for anyone to conduct ethnographic research with everyday Iraqis in a war zone, but especially for a woman who is also a member of a vulnerable minority. Accordingly, I selected civil society members whose knowledge was relevant, who lived in Iraq as regular, but actively involved citizens.

Chapter Two provides a historical context for the current crisis. This chapter focuses on challenging the idea of "sectarianism" and "Arab exceptionalism." It also historically contextualizes the "nation-building" project in 2003 by examining the Mandate Period and the British "nation-building" model in the 1920s. Finally, this chapter uses the Ba'ath state-building period to narrate the story of Iraqis from "below." Accordingly, this chapter is a rudimentary point of re-insertion of the subaltern who were erased from the story of Iraq, focusing on the Assyrian community before and after 2003.

Chapter Three focuses on the global context –global politics, international structure, and its impact on the Iraqi crisis. I conduct a critical discourse analysis of the American government's official speeches regarding Iraq during the period of George W. Bush's Administration (2001-2008) and America's National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2002 to examine the dialectical relationship between the international and the domestic by contextualizing the invasion of Iraq as part of the discourse of the Global War on Terror. This analysis intends to challenge conventional state-building theory and practice, and democracy promotion in the international system. Relatedly, this chapter links the *neoliberalization* of post-invasion Iraq with the neoliberal interventionist model of "democratic nation-building." This challenges the universality of such one-size-fits-all models and demonstrates their inherent limitations in "democratizing" Iraq. *Chapter Four* examines the domestic context, including the failure of domestic political elites in the post-invasion period. It seeks to demonstrate the interaction of domestic and international factors/actors. It relies heavily on semi-structured interviews with Iraqi scholars and civil society practitioners and activists to challenge the conventional analysis of why Iraq failed to "democratize" in 2003. The data gathered from these interviews is also critically analyzed and substantiated by scholarly work. *Chapter Five* highlights the regional

context and the current problem of ISIS. This chapter serves to situate contemporary regional politics and geostrategic considerations within the context of colonialism, imperialism and power politics. More importantly, it challenges the conventional reading of ISIS as inherently Muslim or Iraqi by locating it as a *symptom* of the war on Iraq and the crisis in Syria.

The *Conclusion* begins with the story on the Karrada bombing in 2016 because it is reflective of the reality in Iraq today. Violence is rampant, security is non-existent, governing elites are far removed from those they govern both spatially and ideologically, and the future of the country is uncertain, especially within the context of recent operations to recapture Mosul that began in late October 2016. Most importantly, everyday Iraqis, who have undoubtedly suffered the most since the beginning of this war, are immensely disconnected from the political elites governing the country. This is significant because it tells us that Iraqis, in their continuous cries for change, can potentially act as a democratizing force as they show themselves to be opposed to the politicization of religion, sectarianism and corruption. This potential is what I aim to explore throughout this work and what drives me to offer a grassroots perspective on Iraqi society and politics.

Chapter 1: A Critical Postcolonial Study of Iraq – Literature Review, Theory, and Methodology

> I do not think anything went wrong but it went according to the political plan that was prepared by the US and the UK. That is what happens in an imperialist war that plans on the division of society, on the disempowerment of the majority of the people, and the disempowerment of women and minorities.

> **Yanar Mohammed, Co-Founder of OWFI, March 2016**

1.1 Introduction

Invaded in 2003 as part of the "Global War on Terror," Iraq has undergone thirteen years of top-down "democratic nation-building." By top-down, I am referring to policies imposed by the Anglo-American occupying forces and/or by political elites not generally representative of Iraqi society. This model of "democratic nation-building" has not been successful; the central government is weak as are its institutions. With the failure of conflict resolution or negotiation mechanisms led by the occupying forces, the different interest groups in Iraq have often resorted to violence. Moreover, due to the occupation and post-occupation policies of this new Iraq, the violence among these groups has taken on ethnic and/or religious undertones. This makes reconciliation between these groups harder to achieve but also further entrenches a fractured national identity, advancing the possibility of disintegration. While the makings of ISIS were brewing underneath the surface, their emergence in 2014 when they took over Mosul, served to further impede Iraq's transition to a stable democracy. The editors of a 2015 Issue of *Middle East Research and Information Project,* write,

ISIS had not come out of nowhere. Dark tidings of its establishment of Taliban-like rule in Raqqa and other Syrian locales had swirled for months, and in the spring of 2014 its fighters had crossed into Iraq to capture Ramadi and other towns. But the fall of Mosul made ISIS a central preoccupation of the global media and prompted the US and allied governments to announce a new phase of the 'war on terror.'[74]

The dawn of ISIS, then, served to add to or heighten the issues of insecurity, state weakness, lack of a unified national identity and governance in the literature on Iraq. However, it does demand the shift in focus from *how to transition to democracy* to a critical discussion of *what went wrong*.

The following is a critical review of the relevant literature that emerged prior to the invasion of 2003 and ensuing process of re-building the Iraqi state. I begin with an international context to examine the decision to invade in 2003. Specifically, I historicize the Bush Doctrine by analyzing the post-Cold War system, the literature on "clash of civilizations," the "rogue states" policy of the 1990s, and contemporary neoconservative ideology and the promotion of democracy rooted in discourses such as the "end of history." This review is important because contrary to the conventional discussion of the Global War on Terror, a historical context shows the trajectory, both theoretically and practically, leading to the use of force against Iraq. This is followed by the literature on the conventional "solutions" to the problems in Iraq, including federalism, power-sharing, and conflict resolution. I then provide a critical shift in the discussion, which includes a focus on the policies and legacies of the Anglo-American occupation and the economic factor in the scholarship on oil or resource wars. Let me begin with the recognition that it is not a simple or clear task to categorize large and diverse bodies of work; there is much debate, nuance and contention both within and between this scholarship. I divide these subsections between "conventional" and "critical" for this study based on the former's lack of attention to the invasion and occupation and the latter's focus on the invasion and occupation.

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[74] Kamran Ali et al., "On ISIS," 2015.

I do this because this dissertation takes the invasion and occupation as its point of departure with the recognition that some scholarship within this camp is also problematic and embedded within a sectarian and orientalist framework. This chapter then outlines the theoretical framework of *critical* postcolonial/decoloniality and Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches that underpin this study. Finally, this chapter provides the methodology used to undertake this research. Three related methods of critical discourse analysis, archival work and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data to substantiate the arguments made in this study.

1.2 The Move from Global War on Terror to War on Iraq: Setting the Stage for Invasion

Understanding the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States requires an understanding of the post-Cold War era and America's understanding, or struggle to understand, its place and role in this new international arena. It is within this context that we can historicize and trace back the forces at work, which made it possible for the United States to invade Iraq *unilaterally* and at the expense of the post-World War II world order it helped to set up – multilateralism, sovereignty and diplomacy, among others. The United States emerged from the Cold War as the sole superpower. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, it was confronted with the task of re-shaping its role and position in the international system. The initial optimism of the triumph of the West characterizing the beginning of the post-Cold War era was short-lived as it was challenged by the "rogue state." The rogue state label, however, was not new; the United States had used this label during the Cold War. Work has been done to show how the Carter, Reagan, and George Bush administrations had all identified the threat of these rogue states.[75] It is not the purpose of this literature review to trace this threat; however, it is

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[75] Different administrations labelled states that were perceived as a threat using different labels. See Miles, *US Foreign Policy and the Rogue State Doctrine,* 2013.

important to emphasize that the articulation of "rogue" states as a threat and a problem for international peace and stability in the post-Cold War era was very much parallel to "past efforts by great powers to maintain order in the international system and deal with revolutionary powers, outlaw states, and rogue leaders whose behaviour threatened vital national interests."[76]

Officially,[77] the discourse of rogue states began with National Security Advisor Anthony Lake's *Foreign Affairs* article in 1993. Anthony Lake argued, as the sole superpower, the United States has a "special responsibility for developing a strategy to neutralize, contain, and through selective pressure, perhaps eventually transform these backlash states into constructive members of the international community."[78] He goes on to outline their common characteristics: rogue states are

> ruled by cliques that control power through coercion, they suppress basic human rights and promote radical ideologies…these nations exhibit a chronic inability to engage constructively with the outside world…they are embarked on ambitious and costly military programs…in a misguided quest for a great equalizer to protect their regimes or advance their purposes abroad.[79]

Echoing this position, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (1997-2001) argued, "rogue states constitute one of four distinct categories of countries in the post-Cold War international system (the other three being advanced industrial states, emerging democracies, and failed states).[80] It is important to highlight the links between the concepts of "failed" and "rogue" states because each label resulted in different foreign policies. Whereas failed refers to a state's internal characteristics, rogue state status is mainly due to their (anti-Western) foreign policy outlook.[81]

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[76] Miles, *US Foreign Policy and the Rogue State Doctrine,* 9.
[77] I am using "Officially" to denote the Official Rogue State Policy that began under President Clinton and was exaggerated to regime change by President George W. Bush through the Bush Doctrine.
[78] Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," 45.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Litwak, *Rogue States and US Foreign Policy*, 15.
[81] Bilgin and Morton, "From 'Rogue' to 'Failed' States? The Fallacy of Short-termism," 170.

More importantly, failed states result in a cause for concern, especially as they inch closer to collapse (as in the case of Somalia) whereas rogue states are seen as a direct threat to international order and stability necessitating military threat or action such as Iraq and North Korea.[82]

Within the context of the post-Cold War era, the dissolution of the Soviet Union brought an end to the *perceived* relative stability of a bipolar world. This gave way to uncertainty, which in part, led to a shift in focus to the emerging threat of regional powers. However, "in reality, the problems posed by [these] states' behaviour were not new or, in any significant way, a unique product of the changed international system."[83] In short, "during the 1990s, labelling certain states as 'rogue' and 'failed' served to enable different kinds of policy aimed at two different kinds of states: 'friends' and 'foes'."[84] While inclusion in the rogue state category is applied arbitrarily, three criteria have been commonly invoked: pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, the use of international terrorism as an instrument of state policy, and a foreign policy orientation threatening United States interests in key regions of the world.[85] Not only was this label applied inconsistently, the policies put in place to deal with these disparate states were also inconsistent. This inconsistency was a source of contention for many commentators and analysts, including mainstream ones. For example, Litwak critiques this policy from a practical perspective by problematizing it as a one-size-fits-all strategy or emphasizing the difficulty in distinguishing between cases or how to remove states out of the "rogue state" category once they change their behavior.[86] However, while Litwak's assessment is true, his conventional perspective is limited. I

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[82] Bilgin and Morton, "From 'Rogue' to 'Failed' States? The Fallacy of Short-termism," 170.
[83] Miles, *US Foreign Policy and the Rogue State Doctrine,* 9.
[84] Bilgin and Morton, "From 'Rogue' to 'Failed' States? The Fallacy of Short-termism," 170.
[85] Ibid., 171.
[86] Litwak, *Rogue States and US foreign policy,* 9.

argue an understanding of this process of labelling/framing is more important. Specifically, I am tracing this policy here as it pertains to my case study of Iraq and to contextualize, politically and practically, the lead-up to the invasion in 2003.

Two theoretical threads emerged to understand new threats in the post-Cold War era that are important to historicizing the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. The first points to the victory of liberal democracy and capitalism, which are then held as universal values that can potentially mitigate global conflict if spread across the international system. Manifestations of this ideology vary and are abundant;[87] this literature review highlights one, Fukuyama's "end of history"[88] because it is one of the most prominent examples of this view. In Fukuyama's "end of history" we are told a specific Western definition of democracy marks the end of history- "the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an 'end of ideology' or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism."[89] He further argues, "the triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism."[90] This leads to his assertion that we are witnessing the end of history. That is, we are witnessing "the end of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[91]

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[87] See Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," 1983; Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," 1994; Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World,* 1994; Doyle, "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace," 2005; Hook, *Democratic Peace in Theory and Practice,* 2010; Maoz and Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986," 1993; Kahl, "Constructing a Separate Peace: Constructivism, Collective Liberal Identity, and Democratic peace," 1998.
[88] Fukuyama, "The End of History?" 1989.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

These ideas are problematic for a number of reasons but I limit my critique to two interrelated aspects. First, we are told that liberalism has had to compete with many other ideologies but has surfaced the victor after we have exhausted *all* options when in fact he is only referring to Western ideas about human organization and government. I am not claiming that there exists a homogenous entity that is the "West;" I am drawing on the work of decoloniality theorists to assert that there is a historically and culturally specific definition of certain concepts such as development, progress, or democracy whose specific definition has gained a universal, hegemonic status.[92] In this context, democracy is seen as a Western concept when in fact it is a universal one; democracy's Western definition has come to be seen as universal when it is particular. In Fukuyama's work, the non-Western Other is nowhere to be found because of the second related critique: legitimate or credible ideas about human organization are only to be found in the West. In other words, the "end of history" served to "revive the old developmentalist claim that Western liberal capitalism is a universal paradigm, one that could or should be embraced by countries in both the North and the South."[93]

The prevalence of this ideology is evident when President Bill Clinton declared in his 1994 State of the Union Address, "ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy everywhere. Democracies do not attack each other, they make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy."[94] At the root of this project is the fundamental liberal belief that the spread of liberal values, specifically, liberal

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[92] See Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 2007; Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 2008; Mignolo and Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option,* 2013; Mignolo, "Epistemic, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 2009; Escobar, "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and anti-globalization social movements," 2004; Escobar, *Encountering Development,* 2011; Duara, *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then. Rewriting Histories,* 2003; Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," 2007; Grosfoguel, "World-System Analysis and Postcolonial Studies: A Call for Dialogue from the 'Coloniality of Power' Approach," 2008.
[93] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 2.
[94] Clinton, *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*, 1994.

democracy, would be beneficial for the entire globe. A core underlying assumption of this ideology is that a state's domestic political system is one of the most important factors that determine its international behaviour. Accordingly, the spread of "our culture" – democracy – is an important part of the progressive development of the international society of states and more importantly, to minimize conflict in the international system.

Conversely, the second emerging thread suggests an inevitable "clash of civilizations," which was put forward in Bernard Lewis' "The Roots of Muslim Rage" in 1990 and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" in 1993. Lewis tells us that, there has been "for a long time now," a "rising tide of rebellion" against Western supremacy and a desire to "reassert Muslim values and restore Muslim greatness."[95] This resentment, according to Lewis, is a result of "successive stages of defeat:" first, Islam's loss of domination in the world due to the advancing power of Russia and the West; second, the undermining of Islam in its own territory due to foreign invasion and intervention; third, the challenge of Islam's mastery locally from "emancipated women and rebellious children."[96] Failing to use Western methods to achieve modernity, Lewis writes, Middle Easterners were responsive to fundamentalists telling them "that the old Islamic ways were best and that their only salvation was to throw aside the pagan innovations of the reformers and return to the True Path that God had prescribed for his people."[97] Thus, for Lewis, the two enemies of these fundamentalists were secularism and modernism.

Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*,[98] which uses different terminology to be sure, is similarly problematic. He argues that the "weakness" and "irrationality" of the Other

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[95] Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," 1990.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," 1993.

constitutes an enduring obstacle to the global spread of Western values and institutions.[99] In his

view, the world is divided between unchanging, incommensurate, and static civilizations.

Accordingly, their conflicts with each other will characterize and dominate the future conflicts in

global politics. In his "clash of civilizations," we are told the fundamental source of conflict will

not be ideological or economic but *cultural.* Specifically, "the principal conflicts of global

politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations."[100] He identifies seven

civilizations in the world who share a common language, history, nationality, religion and

assumes that these identities are unchanging, fixed, natural and a given.

Both espouse dangerous foreign policies, especially after the events of 9/11, which

appeared to vindicate their ideology. Specifically, this ideology is dangerous because it limits the

opportunities or mechanisms at our disposal to build mutual understanding, respect and most

importantly, a deeper and critical analyses of these global issues. The idea that "[t]hese

civilizations are bound to clash because they are fundamentally different" does not lend itself to

cooperation; rather, it serves as one piece of the larger discourse and structures that perpetuates

violence and the use of force in the international system. In fact, it espouses a very dangerous

foreign policy wherein us and them are inevitably caught in a fundamental clash that can only be

resolved through the use of force.

Despite their differences, both Fukuyama and Huntington are significant because they are

specific instances of a larger ideology: democratization in its Western-centric and hegemonic

form (liberal democracy) is seen as a fundamental aspect of the dominant world order. Mahdavi

and Knight astutely argue, "while philosophically the End of History and the Clash of

Civilizations are very different, they are nonetheless two sides of the same coin, in that both

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[99] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 2012.
[100] Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," 22.

theses turn the West and the Rest into two monolithic categories."[101] That is, the first implies that the West offers a universal paradigm of development and democracy, which the Rest should follow; the latter suggests similarly that the West is the best so it must prevail over the Other.[102] In short, both theses are flawed and are problematic when applied practically as foreign policy.

The idea of an inevitable "clash of civilizations" is evident in the American government's foreign policy when in sharp contrast to the Clinton-era approach, George W. Bush assumed office in 2001, espousing a "distinctly American internationalism."[103] While these two approaches are *seemingly* in conflict, they are as Mahdavi and Knight argue in their discussion of Fukuyama's "end of history" and Huntington's "clash of civilizations," "opposite sides of the same coin."[104] The unilateral aspect of Bush's foreign policy is relevant to my discussion of the context for the invasion of Iraq, which was a "discounting of the efficacy of the liberal school's institutional and treaty-based system and an emphasis instead on active political and military measures that the United States could pursue unilaterally to ensure national security."[105] However, several officials in his administration adhered to neo-conservatism, which combines Wilson's "emphasis on democracy promotion with an assertive nationalism (reflecting the realist tradition) that seeks to perpetuate American dominance and rejects the constraints that international institutions might impose on American power."[106] After the events of 9/11, the Bush administration's foreign policy reflected key aspects of the neoconservative school of thought.[107] Chapter three elaborates on and problematizes the role of liberal interventionism in the decision to invade Iraq in 2003.

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[101] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 2.
[102] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 4.
[103] Litwak, *Regime Change,* 2007.
[104] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 4.
[105] Litwak, *Regime Change,* 25.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans,* 2004.

We can draw obvious ideological links between neo-conservatism and the "end of history" and the "clash of civilizations" theses. The "end of history" thesis and neo-conservatism share the "idealist" ideology. That is, Western-style democracy is seen as the ideal form of government to be promoted all over the world for the sake of peace. The "clash of civilizations" thesis, on the other hand, shares the militant aspect of neo-conservatism in that democracy can (and should be) spread to the Other, by force if necessary. I argue a critical postcolonial critique of neo-conservatism is much deeper than realist and neo-realist critiques of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. Interventions justified through the rhetoric of spreading democracy and liberal values largely serve to maintain and legitimize the power of the hegemonic West.[108] Moreover, they are a mechanism to impose its notions or particular definitions of democracy, human rights, development etc. Despite certain changes, the basic drive of global governance continues to be to uphold and justify an unequal global order. The belief that peace will only be achieved if democracy in its Western neo-liberal definition is spread all over the globe plays a pivotal role in the perpetuation of the hegemony of the neoliberal economic order. Chapter three critically examines the decision to invade Iraq; the next section of this literature review will shift to the "solutions" offered by conventional scholarship after the invasion.

1.3 Conventional Literature on post-2003 Iraq: Finding "Solutions" to the Problem

The immediate period following the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in April 2003 was characterized by chaos on the ground. What has been labelled an anti-American "insurgency" and what I will refer to as Iraqi resistance, followed almost immediately the Anglo-

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[108] It is important to distinguish between the West as hegemon in this specific context with the recognition that the West is constituted of heterogeneous places, spaces, races, religions, and cultures.

American occupation and prompted analysis and counter-strategies.[109] Fanar Haddad posits that the violence, which engulfed post-2003 Iraq, was perceived by many Iraqis as largely composed of two elements: "the anti-American insurgency that targets American and other Coalition forces and the other more radical branch that is much more widespread in its scope and has targeted American forces, Shi'a Muslims, Kurds, the country's infrastructure and anything else that has a chance of bringing stability to Iraq."[110] In their second volume on "counterinsurgency," which was prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the National Defense Research Institute cited the following four "elements" to understand the violence in post-2003 Iraq: separatists and sectarianism; insurgents, which are also perceived to be a by-product of sectarianism; violent extremists, which are drawn to the insurgency ideologically; Shi'ite Arab militias, most notably the Badr Organization created during the Iran-Iraq War and the Mahdi Army that emerged during the occupation; and criminals.[111] Whatever issues plagued the country following the invasion, Haddad argues the most important thing the Americans and their allies failed to realize was that "no matter how much or little popularity Saddam's regime had, foreign troops would not be welcome on Iraqi soil for long."[112] However, rather than problematize the invasion and occupation, conventional literature maintained the biggest obstacle to democratization fueling the violence in post-2003 Iraq was *sectarianism.* This was defined as the inherent inability of the three major power "blocs" – Shi'a and Sunni Arabs and Kurds – to work together. Below is a literature review of the conventional literature's "solutions" to this problem.

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[109] See Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq," 2003; Malkasian, "The Role of Perceptions and Political Reform in Counterinsurgency: The Case of Western Iraq (2004-05)," 2006; Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 2003; White and Schmidmayr, "Resistance in Iraq," 2003.

[110] Haddad, "The terrorists of Today are the Heroes of Tomorrow: The Anti-British and Anti-American Insurgencies in Iraqi History," 464.

[111] Pirnie and O'Connell, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)," 2008.

[112] Haddad, "The Terrorists of Today are the Heroes of Tomorrow: The Anti-British and Anti-American Insurgencies in Iraqi History," 463.

1.3.1 Federalism

The discussion of federalism has played a significant role in Iraqi politics since 2003, especially, as a solution to the problem of sectarianism. Specifically, "while the preferences of those claiming to speak for the constituent groups of Iraq have transformed over time, opposition to federalism has been a hallmark of reconstruction."[113] For Lawrence Anderson, some Shi'a elites originally opposed federalism because "it represented a dilution of their numerical dominance and democratic rights."[114] By 2005 however, these elites were in support of federalism as they sought to "create an autonomous Shiite region out of the Shiite-dominated governorates in the South."[115] The Kurds, on the other hand, have always been in favour of federalism, according to Anderson, threatening to secede otherwise due to the "autonomy enjoyed in the Kurdish region, the lack of trust among the constituent communities, and the strong support for independence expressed by the Kurds in the 2005 election."[116] Lastly, Anderson contends the Sunni Arabs have always been in opposition to federalism as they see it as the partition of the country.[117] The debate regarding the partition of Iraq has played out in the writing of the new constitution, Iraqi parliamentary politics, and more recently, the events of June 2014 to the present.[118] The debate on federalism has largely dominated the discussion of post-2003 Iraq theoretically as well. This debate has mainly taken place between questions of

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[113] Anderson, "Theorizing Federalism in Iraq," 166.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Anderson, "Theorizing Federalism in Iraq," 2007.
[118] For a discussion on the partition of Iraq, see Gelb, "The Three-State Solution," 2003; Galbraith, "Iraq's Salvation Lies in Letting It Break Apart," 2006; Kaufmann, "Separating Iraqis, Saving Iraq," 2006; Downes, "More Borders, Less Conflict? Partition as a Solution to Ethnic Civil Wars," 2006; O'Hanlon and Joseph, "The Case for Soft Partition of Iraq," 2007; O'Hanlon and Joseph, "If Iraq Must Be Divided, Here's the Right Way to do it," 2014; Taylor, "People Have Talked About Iraq Breaking Up for Years. Now it May Actually Happen," 2014. The Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC sponsored a symposium, "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Partition, and U.S. Foreign Policy" in January 2003.

federalism along ethno-religious lines (consociationalists) on the one hand, and federalism along administrative lines (integrationists) on the other.

John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary outline the debate regarding the two choices the Iraqi state has between the types of federalism. The *integrationist* approach aims to construct a single, overarching public identity.[119] Integrationists favour a "federation that is constructed on nonethnic criteria"[120] and oppose autonomy that is based on groups. Those in favour of this approach call for a strong, centralized, and ethnically impartial Iraqi state, on the grounds that it is necessary to end sectarian violence, combat crime, promote a civic national identity against ethnocentric and sectarian elites, defend the state against its neighbours, and prevent Iraq from becoming a safe haven for insurgents.[121] Specifically, integrationists see Iraq's current problems as a result of "sectarianism and ethnocentrism, usually of recent origin, rather than rooted in established or age-old hatreds."[122] In short, this approach views the invasion of 2003 as the source of conflict, with the recognition that sectarianism was exacerbated by Saddam Hussein's "sectarian and tribal" policies.[123] It is important that this approach recognizes that violence in post-2003 Iraq is partly attributed to the invasion and occupation policies. However, it does so without problematizing the *decision* to invade Iraq in the first place and the occupation. More importantly, critical scholars such as Ismael and Fuller,[124] Alnasseri,[125] and Jawad,[126] not only

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[119] For examples of integrationist thought, see Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, 1991; Horowitz, "Some Realism about Consociational Engineering," 2004; Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management,* 2001; Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," 1991; Wimmer et al, *Facing Ethnic Conflicts: Toward a New Realism,* 2004.

[120] McGarry and O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Prescription," 670.

[121] McGarry and O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Prescription," 2007.

[122] Ibid., 672.

[123] For a discussion on integrational federalism in Iraq, see Dawisha and Dawisha, "How to Build a Democratic Iraq," 2003; Dawisha, "Iraq: Setbacks, Advances, Prospects," 2004; Makiya, "A Model for Post-Saddam Iraq," 2003; Wimmer, "Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Iraq," 2003; Wimmer, "Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Iraq," 2003; Horowitz, "Some Realism about Constitutional Engineering," 2004.

[124] Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2008.

[125] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 2008.

[126] Jawad, "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," 2016.

opposed the invasion of Iraq but understood "sectarianism" as manufactured and as part and

parcel of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. In short, these scholars did not critique the

occupation after it was apparent that its policies were "not working," but understood that the

democratization of Iraq could not occur through an invasion and occupation.

Conversely, the second approach, *consociationalism*,[127] focuses on "accommodating"

Iraq's different communities.[128] This approach informed the Coalition Provisional Authority's

decision to appoint the Interim Governing Council in 2003 and was prominent in the constitution

writing process in 2005 and granted autonomy for the region of Kurdistan and offered protection

to Iraq's diverse communities.[129] This approach has also informed the discussion on the possible

partition of Iraq into three states: Kurdish, Shi'a Arab and Sunni Arab and more recently, to

decentralize the Iraqi government along the same ethnic lines.[130] The second approach to

federalism is also highly problematic. The most concerning aspect of this approach is its

perpetuation of "primordial identities." In so doing, it not only reifies these identities but

politicizes them, which heightens tensions among these groups without acknowledging the role

of the invasion or occupation policies in *sectarianizing* post-2003 Iraq.[131] Also, it implies that

Iraqis are incapable of conceptualizing or holding the modern, democratic concept of

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[127] Consociationalism is largely associated with the scholarship of Arend Lijphart. See Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration,* 1977; Lijphart, "Self-Determination versus Pre-Determination of Ethnic Minorities in Power-Sharing Systems," 275-287. For other examples of consociational thinking, see Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 1972; O'Leary, "Debating Consociational Politics: Normative and Explanatory Arguments," 1-43; McGarry and O'Leary, *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements,* 2004; McRae, *Consociational Democracy in Segmented Societies,* 1974.
[128] For a discussion on consociational federalism in Iraq, see Brancati, "Can Federalism Stabilize Iraq?" 2004; Anderson and Stansfield, "The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model," 2005; and Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 2004; McGarry and O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Participation," 2007; O'Leary, McGarry and Salih, *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq,* 2005.
[129] McGarry and O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Prescription," 674.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Chapter two discusses and challenges the literature on "sectarianism" at greater length.

"citizenship" because they are inherently sectarian and can only identify with tribal or sectarian identities.[132]

Finally, this approach attempts to "accommodate" Iraq's different communities but does so based on an incomplete understanding of Iraqi society. For instance, the communities being considered are only the three "major blocs" – the Shi'a and Sunni Arabs and the Kurds. This is problematic for two reasons: one, only the elites of each "majority" are included; the everyday people within those blocs are still on the margins as the elites continue to vie for power in their name. Second, the minorities are often overlooked and the indigenous people of Iraq are not recognized as such. As of 2008, Minority Rights Group International reports Christians and Turkomans make up 3 percent of the population, Chaldeans 750,000 and Assyrians 225,000, Yezidis 600,000, Sabaean Mandaeans 5000-7000, Shabak 200,000.[133] A measurement of democratic nation-building must include the status of vulnerable minorities, who often find themselves in the crossfire between the struggles for power by the major blocs. Finally, and importantly, there is no easy and "clean" way in which to break up Iraq; the cities of Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul for example, are highly diverse. Even the most seeming "homogenous" area under the Kurdistan Regional Government is significantly diverse ethnically and religiously.

Within the conventional literature on federalism, of course, there has been criticism as well. This has come from a wide variety of scholars working within this approach.[134] For

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[132] See Wimmer, "Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Iraq," 2003. He argues that even *if* most Iraqis want democracy, it may not work because the political conflicts – and he is referring to "sectarian" violence between the Shi'a and Sunni Arabs and the Kurds – "unleashed by democratization" exceed the conflict absorption capacities of the state. Failing to see this "conflict" as a direct result of a foreign invasion and occupation, he outlines why democracy may stir up ethnic conflict in societies such as Iraq.

[133]Taneja, "Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's Minority Communities since 2003," 2007.

[134]See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 1985; McGarry and O'Leary, "Introduction: The Macro-Political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict," 1-40; Ghai, "Autonomy as a Strategy for Diffusing Conflict," 483-530; Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century,* 2000; Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation,* 2003; Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Violence,* 2000; Anderson, "Theorizing Federalism in Iraq," 2007.

Anderson, federalism can be used to resolve conflict, calm secessionist pressures, and manage or acknowledge diversity in deeply divided states while maintaining territorial integrity.[135] In other words, it succeeds by giving some autonomy – a negotiated middle ground between an unsatisfactory status quo and outright independence – to the persecuted group. However, there is a body of scholarship that sees federalism as a contributing factor to secessionism. Writing about the Russian federation, Gorenburg argues, "the structural–historical context of the federal state creates incentives for a certain kind of nationalist mobilization that can take the form of separatism."[136] Specifically, federalism's defining features make secession a possibility in virtually all federations: this is the paradox of this model.[137] One can see this dynamic reflected in Iraqi politics today: the Kurds would not agree to be part of Iraq without a federal model in which they can have an autonomous region in the north.[138] This structure also allows them to play the secession card when they are unhappy with the central government's policies or actions. Theoretically, this literature is problematic because it already takes the tension among these groups as a given and works to mitigate the conflict without a deeper understanding of how and why the tension is there in the first place.[139] Moreover, the ethnically and religiously diverse

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[135] Anderson, "Theorizing Federalism in Iraq," 161.

[136] Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation,* 265.

[137] Anderson, "Theorizing Federalism in Iraq," 2007.

[138] This region is the ancestral homeland of those who identify as Assyrian and Chaldean or who are labelled as Christians by the Iraqi state. Today, the Kurds are a numerical majority but this has a long history of Assyrian/Chaldean dispossession, genocide, and urbanization/Arabization prior to 2003. After 2003, the Kurds were able to negotiate their autonomous status in Iraq, but it is important to note that this land is contested, and for the majority of Assyrians/Chaldeans is, considered to be occupied. There is also a growing body of literature that discusses the "Kurdification" of this minority and others such as Yazidis and Shabak in this region, akin to the Arabization practices under the Ba'ath regime. See Petrosian, "Assyrians in Iraq," 2006; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century,* 2015; Dawood, *Refugees, Warriors and Minorities in Iraq: the case of the Assyrians,* 2014; Youash, "Iraq's Minority Crisis and US National Security: Protecting Minority Rights in Iraq," 2008; Taneja, "Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's Minority Communities Since 2003," 2007.

[139] While there may be successful examples of federalism, the civil strife and outburst of violence in 2004-2005, 2007-2008 and 2014 suggest this brand of federalism, which has entrenched a sectarian state in post-2003 Iraq, has failed.

cities and provinces not only make it impossible for an ethnic/religious-based federalism but may contribute to the escalation of ethnic/religious civil wars.

1.3.2 Power-Sharing

The literature on power-sharing is related to the literature on federalism and is divided between consociational and integrative power-sharing.[140] O'Flynn maintains that power-sharing allows the conflict groups to resolve "longstanding patterns of antagonisms and discrimination and to build a more just and stable society for all."[141] Similarly to the literature on consociational democracy, much of the literature on power-sharing is based on the scholarship of Arend Lijphart. Lijphart begins with two premises: one, that it is generally more "difficult to establish and maintain democratic government in divided than in homogenous countries"[142] and second, the problem of ethnic and other deep divisions is "greater in countries that are not yet democratic than in well-established democracies, and that such divisions present a major obstacle to democratization in the twenty-first century."[143] Lijphart maintains that scholarly agreement on these two points is "universal." He is less concrete on this point but argues that the successful establishment of democracy in *divided societies* necessitates two key elements: "power-sharing and group autonomy."[144] That is, consociational democracy is characterized by first, power-

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[140] For a discussion on power-sharing, see Hechter, *Containing Nationalism,* 2001; Lustick, Miodownik, and Eidelson, "Secessionism in Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage It? 2004; Hale, "Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse," 2004; O'Flynn and Russell, *Power Sharing: New Challenges for Divided Societies,* 2005.
[141] O'Flynn and Russell, *Power Sharing,* 1.
[142] Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 96-97.
[143] Ibid., 97.
[144] Ibid.

sharing, which is the "participation of representatives of all significant communal groups in political decision-making"[145] and second, group autonomy, which gives these groups "authority to run their own affairs, especially in the areas of education and culture."[146] For Lijphart, the broad consensus on the importance of power-sharing is evident by reactions to the creation of the Governing Council in Iraq; he argues, "the Council has been criticized on a variety of grounds, but no one has questioned its broadly representative composition."[147] In sum, Lijphart argues, "power-sharing has proven to be the only democratic model that appears to have much chance of being adopted in divided societies."[148]

There are many shortcomings of this model, especially with its application to the case of post-2003 Iraq.[149] First, it assumes societies are already divided along ethnic or religious lines *after* the conflict. However, in Iraq, the story begins before the conflict; the situation in Iraq is largely related to Western imperialism. That is, we need to examine the "conflict" in Iraq within the context of the invasion and regime change by the United States. Also, a deeper analysis is missing from this model which begs the question, how can we come up with a model to resolve conflict if we have not analyzed the conflict itself? The literature on identity politics related to the postcolonial approach examines the processes of the *politicization* of certain identities and attributes this as in part, a product of foreign intervention and autocratic nation-building, favouring one ethnic or religious group at the expense of others.[150] Finally, while I problematize

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[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 97.
[148] Ibid., 99.
[149] For work that endorses this model for Iraq, see Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 2004; Phillips, "Power-Sharing in Iraq," 2005; O'Leary, "Power-Sharing, Pluralist Federation, and Federacy," 47-91; Parker, "The Iraq We Left Behind: Welcome to the World's Next Failed State," 2012; Public International Law & Policy Group, "Power-Sharing in Iraq: Impossible or Inevitable?" 2014.
[150] See Jiwani, *Discourses of Denial: Mediation of Race, Gender, and Violence,* 2006; Mamdani, "Making Sense of Political Violence in Post-Colonial Africa," 2002; Tarimo, "Politicization of Ethnic Identities: The Case of

the Interim Governing Council in chapter four, it is important to note that installing a "quota"

system along ethno-religious sectarian lines only served to institutionalize "sectarianism" in

post-2003 Iraq, rather than "alleviate" seemingly *ethnic* tensions. Needless to say, this approach

also defines "group" identities in a primordial and essentialist way and fails to see Iraqis as

having other, perhaps more important affiliations, such as class, gender, or in terms of political

spectrum such as centrist, leftist, or right. Iraqi perceptions of how Americans viewed them

solely in terms of "sectarian affiliations" rather than a fully functioning political society is

discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

1.3.3   Conflict Resolution Approaches

The other major body of literature relevant to post-2003 Iraq focuses on conflict

resolution approaches. The scholars of this school are concerned with conflict resolution

mechanisms and institutions in the new Iraq to ensure each power bloc has an economic and

political stake in the system as a way to ensure stability.[151] Similar to its federalist and power-

sharing counterparts, this approach largely focuses on creating stability and democratization

through elites and seldom studies whether the elites represent their constituencies. Despite very

important differences between (and within) these approaches, federalism, power-sharing, and

conflict resolution all share the same problematic epistemological and ontological foundations,

which ensured their failure when applied to Iraq. That is, all of these approaches begin with an

Orientalist understanding of Iraqi society – that Iraqis are inherently sectarian and cannot work

together to rebuild Iraq – without problematizing first, the invasion and second, the occupation

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Contemporary Africa," 2010; Castells, *The Power of Identity,* 2011; Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2009.

[151] This includes but is not limited to the work of such scholars as Palmer, *The Politics of the Middle East,* 2007; Widner, "Constitution Writing and Conflict Resolution," 2005; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution,* 2011; Humphreys, "Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution: Uncovering the Mechanisms," 2005.

and their roles in s*ectarianizing* Iraq. Moreover, these approaches advocate a top-down process of democratization. In other words, the only agents seen as worthy of study or engaging with are the elites who claim to speak on behalf of their constituents. I discuss the unrepresentative and unelected nature of the Interim Governing Council, which is composed mostly of exiles selected by the occupying forces when they institutionalized a sectarian governing system. This sort of system ignores the various and sometimes opposing interests among and within these power blocs. These various interests attest to the importance of looking at the periphery and the grassroots for a more comprehensive picture as opposed to the strict focus on elites. More importantly, within the "major power blocs" there are everyday people whose voices are marginalized at the expense of these elites. A critical engagement with contemporary Iraqi politics requires a break and a deconstruction of these frameworks in order to compose the story from another historical paradigm. Oftentimes, those on the margins or the periphery allow for a more accurate depiction of the politics on the ground. The strength of the "history from below" and "subaltern" approaches lies in the potential for everyday Iraqis to work together to rebuild their country on pluralist, tolerant, and inclusive values. Before I outline some of the critical analyses of post-2003, the next section highlights some conventional critiques of "what went wrong" in Iraq.

1.4 Critiques from *Within:* What "Went Wrong" Per Conventional Literature

As the violence and occupation continued in Iraq, critiques of the War emerged from the conventional literature as well. These were largely concerned with analyzing the occupation's *mistakes*.[152] Larry Diamond, who spent four months as a senior advisor on governance for the

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[152] See Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," 2004; Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction," 2006; Baker III and Hamilton, *The Iraq Studies Group Report,* 2006; Pollack, "Spies,

Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, cites the lack of security as the first and foremost *error* of the Bush administration in Iraq.[153] Specifically, he argues, the coalition should have deployed more "military police and other troops trained for urban patrols, crowd control, civil reconstruction, and peace maintenance and enforcement."[154] Moreover, soldiers were required along the border with Syria and Iran to "intercept the flows of foreign terrorists, Iranian intelligence agents, money and weapons."[155] For Diamond, Washington failed to take these necessary steps because of "hubris and ideology."[156] That is, with the removal of Saddam Hussein's military and security apparatuses, Iraqis would welcome the troops as *liberators* and the US could "hand the country over to Iraqi expatriates such as Ahmed Chalabi, who would quickly create a new democratic state."[157] Diamond fails to acknowledge the inherent problem with this line of thought; he labels American *miscalculations* of Iraqis' perception of the coalition forces as an *error* and sets out to outline what they *should have done* to avoid the problems they encountered.

The critical scholarship in the next section, problematizes the undemocratic nature of "handing over" the country to an exile who was not selected or elected by the Iraqis he will claim to *represent.* This research by contrast seeks to problematize the very idea of a top-down, foreign-led model of democratization. Diamond also identifies the occupation policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army as "strategic miscalculations;"[158] however, he does not contextualize these policies within the context of an illegal foreign occupation. The

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Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong," 2004; Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq,* 2007; Dodge, "Iraqi Transitions: from Change to State Collapse," 2005.
[153] Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," 34.
[154] Ibid., 35.
[155] Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," 36.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., 43.

disastrous ramifications of these policies will be discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters but it is important to note here that these were much more problematic than *miscalculations* but were perceived by Iraqis as akin to state *destroying.*

Like Diamond, James Dobbins labels Iraq an "unwinnable war" for the US due to its "initial miscalculations, misdirected planning, and inadequate preparation."[159] For Dobbins, writing in 2005, coalition forces will continue to "inspire local resistance, radicalize neighbouring populations, and discourage international cooperation" unless they "recast" their role.[160] That is, American forces have "lost the support of the Iraqi population and *probably* cannot regain it."[161] While Dobbins argues for enhancing security and protecting the Iraqi population from violence, he does so because, for him, "the success or failure of an offensive such as the November assault on Falluja must be measured not according to body counts or footage of liberated territory, but according to Iraqi public opinion."[162] Specifically, if Iraqis are more supportive of the insurgents than the government, then "the battle, perhaps even the war, will have been lost."[163] The best solution for Dobbins includes supporting the Iraqi government in its struggle against the insurgents, gaining the support and cooperation of neighbouring countries and European allies, and militarily withdrawing from Iraq as soon as the Iraqi government can be safely left in charge.[164] Much like Diamond, Dobbins fails to problematize the legitimacy of the invasion or to contextualize "what went wrong" in Iraq within the context of a foreign occupation. He is right that the safety of everyday Iraqis should have taken precedence, but he makes this argument from the perspective of a strategist who is embedded in

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[159] Dobbins, "Iraq: Winning the Unwinnable War," 16.
[160] Dobbins, "Iraq: Winning the Unwinnable War," 17.
[161] Ibid., 19. Emphasis added.
[162] Ibid., 20.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Dobbins, "Iraq: Winning the Unwinnable War," 2005.

a state-centric framework. A decolonial theoretical framework, which I discuss below, brings to the forefront the lives of everyday Iraqis. Moreover, it problematizes the occupation rather than look for solutions to *oversights* or *miscalculations.*

Toby Dodge puts forward a much more sophisticated, yet conventional, critique of the Iraq War and specifically, of the problem of "civil war." He argues, "the origins of the Iraqi civil war lie in the complete collapse of both the administrative and coercive capacity of the state."[165] Moreover, it is the US' inability to reconstruct the Iraqi state, its ministries, civil servants, police force and army that "lies at the heart of the Iraqi problem."[166] Dodge is methodical in his examination of the failures in Iraq. He begins with the destruction of seventeen of Baghdad's twenty-three ministries after weeks of violence and looting.[167] Along with the destruction of the state, he points to the mass unemployment (between 20,000 and 120,000) that resulted from the policy of de-Ba'athification.[168] It is this institutional destruction of the Iraqi state that Dodge cites as the reason why Iraqi identity begins to crumble and why people begin to look for "whatever grouping, militia or identity offers them the best chance of survival in times of profound uncertainty."[169] While he recognizes the security vacuum left in the wake of disbanding the Iraqi army, he incorrectly argues that "in early 2006, a new crisis arose with even greater potential for destabilisation: civil war."[170] Critical Iraqi scholars agree that disbanding the Iraqi army heightened the problem but the emergence of "sectarianism" was the direct result of American occupation policies. Drawing on such critical scholars, I argue that what is happening

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[165] Dodge, "The Causes of US Failure in Iraq," 87.
[166] Dodge, "The Causes of US Failure in Iraq," 87.
[167] Ibid., 88.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid., 89.

in Iraq is not a civil war. More specifically, the *sectarianization*[171] of Iraq was the result of occupation policies, which institutionalized sectarianism and fragmented the Iraqi state. I discuss this process in greater detail in the next chapter.

In sum, while conventional literature emerged critiquing the War, even from those who were not opposed to the invasion or were pro-intervention, it was not a substantive critical examination of post-2003 Iraq. This is the theoretical strength of critical postcolonial/decolonial approaches: rather than seeing the violence or failure to democratize as a result of "mistakes" or "miscalculations" of the coalition forces, or as a result of an Iraqi culture inimical to democratization, critical approaches problematize the invasion and occupation and contextualize "what went wrong" within that framework. This is an important distinction between conventional and critical examinations of post-2003 Iraq because they allow for vastly different "solutions." In other words, conventional literature suggests a larger military force to "keep the peace" or multilateralism as a way to appear legitimate to Iraqis or military withdrawal from Iraq and a transfer of power to an Iraqi government. However, critical postcolonial/decolonial approaches offer potential alternatives to this "top-down" foreign-imposed model of state-building or "democratization." This research draws on this critical literature to explore the alternative of democratization from "below," which is representative, inclusive and plural.

1.5 Critical Approaches to Understanding post-2003 Iraq

There have been some notable critical voices analyzing the situation in Iraq post-invasion. I focus on the overarching themes of the scholarship within this literature, as it is

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[171] While sectarianism implies a state of being or an observation, I am using *sectarianization* here as a verb to denote mine and other critical Iraqi scholars' arguments that there has been a *process* of imposing and entrenching sectarianism throughout all aspects of post-2003 Iraq.

impossible to outline them all in a brief literature overview such as this. It is undeniable that the situation following the invasion of Iraq has been fraught with difficulties and large-scale violence. Much of this literature identifies the occupation and its policies as a large contributing factor in the lack of democratization in post-2003 Iraq.

Ali Allawi argues the CPA was a cover for determining an American post-war Iraq policy where none had existed before the invasion.[172] He goes on to maintain that the occupation, which used the rhetoric of liberation but was in reality, a matter of unilateral action and without accountability to Iraqis, evolved into the administration of the CPA.[173] While he is critical of the occupation and its policies, he is problematically embedded within the "sectarian" framework as he maintains that the cleavages within Iraqi society existed before the fall of Baghdad. He contends that "Iraq had never had a grand national compact, such as an overarching constitution to which all subscribed, or even an 'understanding' between its component groups."[174] This contention runs in contrast to many critical scholars who have argued that an understanding of sectarian identities in Iraq requires more critical thought and nuance as well as those who have looked at the role of the invasion and occupation in *politicizing* sectarian identities in post-2003 Iraq.[175] For instance, Tareq Ismael and Max Fuller identify the Anglo-American occupation as the direct cause of political sectarianism in postwar Iraq.[176] They argue that the majority of Western coverage of the War has labelled all violence as "sectarianism," which has been seen as deeply rooted in the history and Islamic culture of Iraq.[177] Critiquing this common conception of Iraqi culture, they argue, "this violent sectarianism is in fact a direct function of Anglo-American

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[172] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* 2007.
[173] Ibid., 110.
[174] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq,*"145.
[175] I elaborate on this argument in Chapter Two.
[176] Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2009.
[177] Ibid.

occupation policy, which has been formulated to advance American interests in the region, and consolidate US dominance by eliminating nationalistic currents in Iraq through a policy of 'divide and conquer' and political decentralization."[178] They further their argument by historicizing sectarianism in Iraq and conclude that social sectarianism had been controlled in modern Iraq through an ongoing process of state and institution building "inculcating Iraqis with a sense of 'Iraq-ness' and renewed national spirit [however problematic] that had superseded atavistic affiliations and subnational identities."[179] They identify the undoing of this national project in post-invasion Iraq as a "deliberate" occupation policy "to create a pliable and weak Iraqi state that would be unable to resist the entrenchment of Western commercial and geo-strategic interest."[180]

Shereen Ismael makes a similar argument regarding sectarianism in post-2003 Iraq. She argues, "this [sectarianism] has been treated not merely as a present-day reality foisted onto Iraq by war and occupation but as the interpretive lens to view the whole of Iraq's political history."[181] In her critique, she emphasizes the modern Iraqi state's model of nation-building that "integrated the country's disparate ethnic/religious communities into a national program."[182] For Ismael, the destruction of Iraq's national institutions by the occupation has served to re-define the basis of Iraqi politics along sectarian lines. She historicizes this as US policy in the country from as early as 1991; in their efforts to render the Ba'ath party incapable of governing Iraq, the US has long nurtured sectarian parties.[183] Post-2003, the CPA handpicked and imposed an Interim Governing Council (IGC) whose composition was sectarian with little popular base, had

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[178] Ibid., 444.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 444.
[181] Ismael, S., "The Republic of Iraq," 215.
[182] Ibid, 215.
[183] Ibid.

very little in common with ordinary Iraqis (as many of its members had been living out of Iraq for decades) and no bureaucratic apparatus for decision-making.[184] She follows this with various occupation policies that served to establish (and entrench) the Iraqi state as sectarian as opposed to a national and unified institution.

Similarly, Herring and Rangwala emphasize the US occupation and policies in Iraq as a hindering factor to the democratization of the country. Their central argument is that Iraq is a "fragmented" state (similar to Ismael's "sectarian state") rather than a coherent one because the "US has subordinated or distorted the state building process in its attempts to shape its outcome in the particular direction it desired."[185] They collect extensive evidence, including opinion polls, to show that Iraqis have a strong "obligation to an Iraqi state and a predominant desire throughout the country for a high degree of centralization and state power."[186] Their work is useful in terms of the amount of empirical evidence but more importantly, for linking Iraq to the international in terms of identity and statehood. Rather than focusing solely on opposition between groups, they also emphasize the fragmentation within sectarian groups; "Iraqi political actors remain locked into a struggle to strengthen their positions against their rivals, not only from different sectarian or ethnic groups, but also from within their own groups."[187] This emphasis on the fragmentation in Iraq is problematic; rather than analyzing competition between groups as unique to Iraq and as a factor in their inability to democratize, I argue that competition between groups occurs within all states. More importantly, it speaks to the limitations of this "sectarian" lens; there would be no competition *within* each sect if sectarian identity was truly the defining feature of Iraqi politics. Herring and Rangwala also highlight the potentially large

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[184] Ibid, 216.
[185] Herring and Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments,* 260.
[186] Ibid., 271.
[187] Ibid., 276.

amount of material resources at the disposal of the Iraqi state; this is seen to create major incentives for the fragments to continue the struggle to control state institutions and to seek support from international and transnational forces to strengthen their positions.[188]

There are particular advantages to this theoretical lens for understanding Iraqi politics post-2003. First, it provides a historical context for foreign intervention (specifically, the US for post-2003) in Iraq but also the region of the Middle East. This is helpful for a comprehensive analysis of US foreign policy but also to contextualize Iraq's (and other states' in the region) responses to these policies. This context also helps to frame the continuing violence in Iraq post-invasion and occupation; in particular, the violence and "sectarianism" plaguing the state since the invasion and regime change. This lens also helps to explain the effects of the regional and international systems on Iraqi domestic politics. In addition, this approach acknowledges that pre-invasion Iraq was not a democracy, religious and ethnic minority rights were not fully protected, and the grassroots were not fully included in the political system. However, it makes clear that the nature of the seemingly "ethno-religious" conflict in post-war Iraq is very different from the tensions that existed prior to the invasion in 2003.

Other critical scholars extend the argument of the above approach to think about the "economic factor" in the Iraq war. While these scholars agree that the occupation is problematic and an important factor in the lack of democratization in post-2003 Iraq, they begin their analysis within the framework of imperialism to problematize the invasion. In this approach, Iraq's geostrategic location is important (as is the Middle Eastern region) but its large oil reserves are seen as the most important factor for the invasion. In *Imperial Overstretch: George W. Bush and the Hubris of Empire,* Burbach and Tarbell draw connections between the Bush administration's

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[188] Ibid., 277.

decision to go to war with Iraq and the granting of billion dollar contracts to favoured

corporations for the reconstruction of Iraq as well as non-competitive contracts for cleaning up

the oil fields.[189] Most importantly, these authors argue that Iraq is being restructured not to be a

democracy but to fall in line with the global capitalist system and the free market. Likewise,

Juhasz contends that Iraq is undergoing a radical reconstruction of its entire economy; "the US

has nothing like the unbridled capitalism that the Bush administration is unleashing on Iraq."[190]

In *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time*, Juhasz argues the Bremer

Orders are the outline of President Bush's economic plan for the rest of the world.[191] The Bremer

Orders are not just temporary fixes for a country under occupation; "they are designed to

permanently revolutionize the Iraqi economy, yanking a state-run model into a model for global

corporate capitalism by US fiat."[192] Her work contextualizes the Iraqi invasion into the larger

global order and the economy of oil. This is important for an understanding of how the Iraq war

fits into the context of the War on Terror and the new world order.

Finally, an important emerging literature is the work on "oil wars," which is largely based

on the work of Kaldor, Karl and Said. In *Oil Wars,* Kaldor, Karl and Said draw a distinction

between "old wars" and "new wars," the new ones being based chiefly on oil.[193] Relatedly, there

is Michael Klare's scholarship on "resource wars."[194] Iraq currently has the second largest

proven oil reserves in the world and unofficially has been speculated to possess the largest

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[189] Burbach and Tarbell, *Imperial Overstretch,* 2004.
[190] Juhasz, "Capitalism Gone Wild,"19.
[191] Juhasz, *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time*, 2006.
[192] Juhasz, "Capitalism Gone Wild," 22.
[193] Kaldor, Karl and Said, *Oil Wars,* 2007.
[194] See Klare, *Resource Wars: The Landscape of Global Conflict,* 2001; Klare, "The Coming War with Iraq: Deciphering the Bush Administration's Motives," 2003.

reserves, making it potentially the world's largest oil exporter in the future.[195] Kaldor, Karl and

Said argue that supporters of the war deny that military action in Iraq is linked with a desire to

control its oil but do assert that "these massive reserves are of vital strategic interest to the West,

and thus the installation of a friendly regime in Iraq is essential for national security."[196] There is

widespread agreement in social science research that oil and war or conflict are linked.[197] This

literature provides a great way to think about "resource wars," especially with regards to oil. It

also helps to explain what is happening *inside* Iraq after the invasion and emphasizes the role of

oil in the invasion.[198] However, while this literature problematizes the invasion, it does not focus

on a full comprehension of "sectarianism," or a problematization of the mainstream explanation

of "sectarianism," which has dominated analyses of post-2003 Iraqi politics and society. I argue

that much of the conventional literature on Iraq, including some critical scholarship, is embedded

within this logic of sectarianism without much critical thought or a problematization of the

mainstream explanation of "sectarianism."

1.6 Theoretical Framework

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[195] This claim has been asserted by a number of historians and scholars working in Iraqi studies. See Ismael and Haddad, *Iraq: The Human Cost of History,* 2004; Zedalis, *The Legal Dimensions of Oil and Gas in Iraq,* 2009; Ismael and Ismael, *Government and politics of the contemporary Middle East,* 2010.

[196] Kaldor, Karl and Said, *Oil Wars,*1.

[197] See Fouskas and Gokay, *The New American Imperialism; Bush's War on Terror and Blood for Oil,* 2005; Ahmad, *Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Imperialism of Our Time,* 2004; Klare, *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum,* 2007; Kubursi and Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order,'" 1993; Al Habashneh and Al Katatsheh, "*Al 'Ilaqat Al Roosiyah- Al Seeniyah l'fatrah 1991-2010,"* (Russian-Chinese Relationships: 1991-2010), 2013.

[198] See Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict,* 2001; Klare, "The Coming War with Iraq: Deciphering the Bush Administration's Motives," 2003; Burbach and Tarbell, *Imperial Overstretch: George W. Bush & The Hubris of Empire,* 2004; Juhasz, "Capitalism Gone Wild," 2004; Juhasz, *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time,* 2006; Juhasz, *The Tyranny of Oil,* 2008; Kaldor, Karl, and Said, *Oil Wars,* 2007.

This dissertation's overall aim is twofold: first, this research problematizes the regime change and processes of "nation-building" in post-2003 Iraq through the lens of critical Postcolonialism by using the international, regional and domestic as levels of analysis. Second, I am interested in exploring the potential for a grassroots *enunciation* of the Iraqi state and politics. Specifically, I aim to challenge the way Iraqi people have, from the colonial creation of the Iraqi state until now, been denied the right to forge their own political future. Accordingly, the research question which drives this study is: *why has the "democratic nation-building" project in Iraq failed since the US-led regime change in 2003 until 2016*? Related to this, I also examine the following interrelated questions: a) in what ways has the US invasion and occupation facilitated or exacerbated conditions that have given rise to sectarianism, violence, dysfunctional government and movements like Al Qaeda-Iraq or ISIS? and b) were there elements of grassroots Iraqi-led state building in 2003? Are these elements still present in Iraq?

This research aims to engage with the question of decoloniality posed by critical scholars such as Ramon Grosfoguel: what the world system would look like if we changed the loci of enunciation from that of a European man to an Indigenous woman in the Americas.[199] For Grosfoguel, "this can only be achieved with a decolonial epistemology that overtly assumes the decolonial geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge as points of departure to a radical critique."[200] In applying this question to Iraq, this research shifts the focus from the *state* to *people.* It means historicizing and contextualizing the current situation in post-2003 Iraq but more importantly, to engage seriously with Iraqi enunciations of the invasion, occupation policies, and the current social and political situation in Iraq.

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[199] Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms," 216.
[200] Ibid., 215.

More specifically, this approach implies that one has to recognize that the Iraqi state was first founded on the British Monarchy in the 1920s and then on the neoliberal democratic model imposed by the US in 2003. Iraqi state-building in between these periods was undertaken mostly by unelected authoritarian regimes, which continued to rely on colonial institutions, and autocratic and often foreign-led nation-building. This highlights the importance of this project's first aim, which is to show the intersections of global forces and domestic politics in the case of Iraq. Moreover, it demonstrates the importance of including *people's* enunciations of what Iraq could or should be. Critical Postcolonialism is an appropriate theoretical lens because much of it works to "retrieve silenced histories that lay behind the road of Western power both in terms of the objective history of subaltern or dominated, marginalized groups, 'counter histories' and in terms of the subjective experience of the effects of colonialism and domination."[201] However, this research also involves a reconstructive element to retrieve pluralist and *Iraqi* enunciations of Iraq, which are potentially more inclusive and democratic. As such, this project brings together two complementary theoretical perspectives; critical postcolonial/decolonial thought and Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches. I outline each in turn below.

1.6.1 Critical Postcolonialism/Decoloniality

In this research, I am using critical Postcolonialism as an umbrella concept to include postcolonial, decolonial, anti-colonial, and critical race theory. Postcolonialism is not a homogenous theory; it is a body of work produced by scholars writing from different places, spaces, and perspectives. More importantly, postcoloniality is articulated alongside other economic, social, cultural, and historical factors and therefore, in practice, it works differently in various parts of the world.[202] Drawing on Chowdhry and Nair's interrogation of conventional

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[201] Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse,* 8.
[202] Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism,* 22.

International Relations (IR) literature, I posit that critical Postcolonialism, more than other

critical theories, engages the cultural politics of the colonial past and present, a politics that

accompanies the contestations surrounding global hierarchy.[203] Postcolonialism is theoretically

and epistemologically informed by political-economic approaches in the tradition of Marxist

theory,[204] by deconstructivist and discourse analytical approaches[205] and by critique of modernity

approaches such as Critical Theory.[206] It has also influenced and been influenced by other critical

theory such as the Subaltern Studies Group,[207] Intellectual Dependency,[208] and Decoloniality.[209]

As a field of study, Postcolonialism is most often associated with the 'trifecta': Edward Said,[210]

Gayatri Spivak,[211] and Homi Bhabha.[212] In any colonial context, economic exploitation, the

production of knowledge and strategies of representation depend heavily on one another. That is,

"specific ways of seeing and representing racial, cultural and social difference were essential to

the setting up of colonial institutions of control, and they also transformed every aspect of

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[203] Chowdhry and Nair, *Power Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class,* 2004.

[204] See Marx, *Capital,* 1976 (first published in 1867); Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* 1939 (originally published in 1917); Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks,* 1992 (originally published in the 1950s and first translated into English in the 1970s).

[205] See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* 1972; Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 2001 (originally published in 1967).

[206] See writers in the Frankfurt School such as Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays,* 2002 (originally published in1972); Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* 2001 (originally published in 1944); See writers in Cultural Studies such as Williams, *Culture and society, 1780-1950,* 1960; Hall, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79,* 1996; Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,* 1997.

[207] The Subaltern Studies Group emerged in the 1980s and were interested in postcolonial societies, with a focus on South Asia in particular. The 'Subaltern' in this context is in reference to the work of Antonio Gramsci. See Guha and Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, 1988 (selected essays from the first five volumes of *Subaltern Studies*); Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 2000.

[208] Heavily influenced by the work of *Dependencia* writers, this scholarship of work applies the idea of dependency to the academy. See Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science: Responses to Eurocentrism,* 2006; Alatas, "Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences," 2003.

[209] This is an emerging body of work from Latin America, which focuses on modernity and coloniality. See Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 1992; See Cultural Studies (Special Issue: Globalization and the De-Colonial Option), Volume 2-3. US: Taylor & Francis Group.

[210] See Said, *Orientalism,* 1979; Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 1993.

[211] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988.

[212] See Bhabha, *Nation and Narration,* 1990*;* Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 1994.

European civil society."[213] These processes endure in the contemporary world even if in different ways and through different mechanisms. Specifically, this theoretical framework allows for a more comprehensive understanding of events, policies and politics because they *historicize* and *contextualize*; the following chapters argue that we cannot understand the American decision for regime change in Iraq, contemporary Iraqi politics, or the emergence of fundamentalist movements such as ISIS without critically examining the historical and political processes through which they came about.

The contributions of Postcolonialism are many but some of the most important include subjectivity and the process of *othering*, the relationship between colonialism and knowledge/representation, and modes of resistance. I make three interrelated arguments for using critical postcolonial theories to understand the crisis of "democratic nation-building" in post-2003 Iraq. First, postcolonial theories point to the inherent foundational problem of "difference" in IR as both a discipline and practice.[214] It is this predominant understanding of our world that results in the instinctive and taken-for-granted assumption that diversity in the international system, or inside each unit, must result in violence and chaos. And in turn, that "sameness" or "homogeneity" are the only ways to ensure order and stability. This is reflected in neoliberal interventionist or democracy promotion approaches, which aim to spread a specific form of democracy across the globe in order to ensure security and peace. Second, postcolonial theories link the processes of colonialism with the production of knowledge. In doing so, they help us to de-construct the putative naturalness or universality of the international system and international relations. Moreover, they allow us to re-imagine, re-narrate and re-construct alternatives to said

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[213] Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 85.
[214] See Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference,* 2004; Inayatullah and Dauphinee, *Narrative Global Politics: Theory, History and the Personal in International Relations,* 2016; Seth, *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A Critical Introduction,* 2013;

international system and relations. Finally, postcolonial theories are inextricably tied to a critical political project of *change* from the current hegemonic world order.

The Mutual Constitution of the Self and the Other

Postcolonial scholarship is concerned with the relationship between the Western Self and its Other and their mutual constitution.[215] More specifically, postcolonial theories begin with the premise that "imperialism is a critical historical juncture wherein postcolonial national identities are constructed in opposition to European ones and come to be understood as Europe's 'Others.'"[216] Similarly, Said's concept of Orientalism as a *discourse* helps us to understand the process by which "European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[217] These ideas are important for this research because first, they enable us to think about the ways that discourse and action cannot be separated. That is, theories and policies are not separate enterprises; the way we think about, write about and talk about the Other is produced and perpetuates violent policies in the international system, especially in terms of how threats are constructed. Second, these ideas are powerful in analyzing the construction of threats, the labelling of certain states such as Iraq as "rogue" or "failed" states, and in turn, the idea that some states' sovereignty is "negotiable," which help pave the road for policies of regime change and the use of military force.

Inayatullah and Blaney begin their *IR and the Problem of Difference,* with the assertion that in both its dominant neorealist and neoliberal guises, "IR misses the way international

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[215] See Said, *Orientalism,* 1979; Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 1994; Agathangelou and Ling, "Power and Play Through Poisies: Reconstructing Self and Other in the 9/11 Commission Report," 2005; Barkawi and Laffey, "The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies," 2006; Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places: Indigeneity, Cosmology, and the Limits of International Theory,* 2009.
[216] Chowdhry and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations,* 2.
[217] Said, *Orientalism,* 3.

society – as both a system of states and a world political economy – forms a competition of cultures in which the principles of sovereignty and self-help work to sanctify inequality and subjugate those outside of the centers of 'the West.'"[218] This points to the significance of the ways in which a discipline that purports to study the political and economic relations between states in the international system comes to ignore or fails to seriously engage with processes of colonialism, neocolonialism and their responses.

This is especially significant when we consider the monumental and all-encompassing effect of these processes on the world economy and politics. Inayatullah and Blaney argue that this failure on the part of IR is "IR's relative incapacity to acknowledge, confront, and explore difference."[219] Their work emphasizes important linkages between the "national" and "international" spheres. In the conventional narrative, "disorder and degeneration are thought to result from difference; uniformity or homogeneity naturally produces social order and stability."[220] In other words, "the treatment of difference outside would follow from the treatment of difference inside –both deducible from the equation of difference as the problem to which creating an 'empire of uniformity' is the solution."[221] This can be seen in Clinton's aforementioned State of the Union Address where he advocates for the global promotion of democracy because "democracies do not go to war with each other." In other words, "sameness" (modeled on *us*) will ensure stability and peace in the international system, politically and economically. In chapter three I critically analyze the democratic peace theory and its use in the justification for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as one such instance of promoting "security" via "sameness."

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[218] Inayatullah and Blaney, *IR and the Problem of Difference*, 2.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Inayatullah and Blaney, *IR and the Problem of Difference,* 29.
[221] Ibid.

Inayatullah and Blaney's understanding of identity as mutually constituted is important here because where "the bounded political constructs (and is constructed by) others both within and beyond its boundaries,"[222] the Other is constructed as a "perpetual threat in the form of states, foreign groups, imported goods, and alien ideas, and as difference within, vitiating the presumed but rarely, if ever, achieved 'sameness.'"[223] This works the same way *inside* the state in terms of nationalism where the Other is "managed or governed by some combination of hierarchy, eradication by assimilation or expulsion, and tolerance."[224] *Outside* the state, the Other is "balanced and deterred, or, in appropriate cases, subjected to coercion or conquest."[225] Again, we can connect this desire for uniformity or homogeneity to policies – or myths – of "democratic nation-building." That is, this Western model of democracy, which is seen as universal, is founded on the homogeneity of building a "national" identity; both of which are designed to create a homogenous "inside" and "outside" in order to establish *order* and mitigate *chaos.*

Echoing these sentiments, Agathangelou and Ling contend that "a binary of 'Self' vs 'Other' besets world politics, producing violence for all."[226] More specifically, this binary "convinces the Self that it has no option but to issue an ultimatum to the Other: convert or face discipline."[227] Labelling contemporary world politics as a "neoliberal imperium," Agathangelou and Ling argue that conversion occurs through "liberalization, democratization, regime change or nation-building."[228] Chapter three traces the discourse prior to the invasion where Iraq is *securitized:* Saddam Hussein is depicted as a mad man capable of inflicting nuclear devastation

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[222] Ibid., 39.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From empire to multiple worlds,* 1.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.

on his neighbours, the international community and the United States. Moreover, the only option presented as effective is regime change through the use of military force.

Colonialism and Knowledge Production: De-construction and Re-construction

In the introduction, I briefly discussed Mignolo's critique of the idea of neutral knowledge.[229] As a reminder, Mignolo argues that the geopolitics of knowledge asks who, when, why, and where knowledge is generated, reflecting a more critical examination of the process of knowledge production.[230] For Mignolo, these questions mean a recognition that thinking does not come before *being;* rather, it is a racially marked body in a geo-historically marked space that speaks.[231] For decoloniality scholars, the Eurocentric epistemology of both International Relations theories of realism and liberalism has concealed these theories' geo-historical and biographical locations. In other words, this epistemology also created the idea of universal knowledge as if the knowing subjects were universal as well as self-generating. Conversely, scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith show how "different histories, artefacts, ideas, texts, and images constitute Western knowledges, philosophies, and definitions of human nature as they are collected, classified, preserved, arranged, and represented back to the West."[232] In other words, the archive of Western culture and knowledge is composed of multiple traditions of knowledge. For example, history suggests that civilizations have contributed to the development of each other; the Islamic Civilization contributed to the scientific and literary revival in the West as well as the intellectual challenges to Christian theology.[233] Accordingly, acknowledging this mutual

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[229] Decoloniality theories' work on knowledge production is also tied to a political project of epistemic "de-linking" to change the *context* of the conversation as opposed to just the *content.*
[230] Mignolo, "Epistemic, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 2009.
[231] Ibid., 160.
[232] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 46.
[233] Mahdavi and Knight, *Dignity of Difference,* 2012.

dependence of the world's civilizations is a first and vital step to the call for inter- and intra-civilizational dialogue and multiple modernities.

The emerging field of comparative political philosophy is especially useful in this regard. In *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction,* Dallmayr asserts, "to adopt an imperative or learning attitude means to accept the existing plurality of philosophies as well as the 'pluralism' of life-worlds."[234] Challenging the hegemonic "universality," which has for so long excluded the Other, Dallmayr argues "the point of comparative political theory is precisely to move in the direction of a more genuine universalism, and beyond the spurious "universality" traditionally claimed by the West and the Western canon –and also by some recent intellectual movements."[235]

Deconstructing the process of knowledge production is useful to this research because it allows us to problematize the knowledges underlying the conventional understandings of post-2003 Iraq. Benjamen Isakhan problematizes the coverage of politics in Iraq because it "tends to privilege disagreements and disunities among myriad ethno-religious factions over the complexity of Iraqi politics."[236] Moreover, whatever problems arise in the "democratic nation-building process," conventional literature ascribes to the "backward and barbaric nature of the Iraqi people"[237] rather than as the result of the "invading and occupying forces of the West."[238] For Isakhan and other critical scholars, these conceptualizations of Iraqi society and politics are central to the entire enterprise of "democratizing" Iraq. More importantly, they are underlined by "a series of very old ideas about the supposed political division between East and West"[239] where

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[234] Dallmayr, *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction,* 4.
[235] Ibid.,15.
[236] Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq,* 3.
[237] Ibid., 4.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.

the "West is seen as having a unique inclination to democracy and the East is seen as its opposite."[240] I draw on this critical understanding of the link between coloniality and knowledge in the following chapters to problematize conventional notions such as "sectarianism," "Arab exceptionalism," and "democracy promotion" among others.

Postcolonial Theories as modes of Resistance

Critical postcolonial/decolonial thought de-cloaks the geo-historical, racialized spaces from which knowledge is produced. That is, their perspective is shaped by their racialized, colonized and unequal economic location in the world system. Accordingly, their theories are written *for some purpose,* which they make transparent in their work. For example, Mignolo advocates a decolonial option of *de-linking.*[241] Agathangelou and Ling among other critical postcolonial scholars call for multiple Modernities, cosmologies and worlds.[242] Mignolo argues,

> Geo- and body-politics of knowledge has been hidden from the self-serving interests of Western epistemology and that a task of decolonial thinking is the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued.[243]

Accordingly, in problematizing the invasion, the conventional narrative of post-2003 Iraq and the reasons for its inability to "democratize" such as "sectarianism" and "exceptionalism," and offering Iraqi perspectives, this research is an act of *epistemic disobedience.* There have been other templates for such work; a notable example is Isakhan's postcolonial study of the

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[240] Ibid.
[241] See Mignolo, "De-linking," 2007; Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 2009.
[242] Mahdavi, "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?" 2013; Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics,* 2009; Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places,* 2009; Jones, *Decolonizing International Relations,* 2006; Shilliam, *International Relations and non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity,* 2010; Chowdhry, "Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Interventions in International Relations," 2007.
[243] Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 162.

discourses of "democratization" of Iraq. His work provides an *alternative* history of Iraq by highlighting how "from ancient Mesopotamian assemblies, through Islamic reform and doctrine, and despite foreign interference and autocratic tyrants, Iraq has a democratic history of its own."[244] This re-reading of Iraq's history, he argues, forces us to acknowledge that "democracy is not 'ours' to 'give' to the Iraqis," but that democracy is a system of governance underpinned by virtues of "justice, equality, and liberty – virtues that the people of Iraq have at least as much historical claim to as anyone in the West."[245] In sum, re-reading histories from the perspective of the Other can be an act of resistance. Accordingly, I have used Subaltern Studies/History from Below approaches to complement critical postcolonial theories as a mechanism of *resistance.* It is for this reason that I draw on both theoretical frameworks and that I am committed to exploring Iraqi *enunciations* of their society and politics. The next section elaborates on my second approach, Subaltern Studies/History from Below, but also fleshes out the connection between this part of postcolonial thought – resistance – and how it can be complemented by Subaltern Studies and their project of *emancipation.*

1.6.2   Subaltern Studies/History from Below

In *Subalterns and Social Protest,* Stephanie Cronin contends "the collection deliberately shifts the spotlight downwards towards the oppressed and the marginal, in a challenge to the elitist nature of the historiography of the Middle East and North Africa in an attempt to uncover 'the politics of the people.'"[246] Drawing on this framework, I propose to combine the literature on "history from below" as conceptualized by Eric Hobsbawm[247] and E.P. Thomson[248] and as

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[244] Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq,* 5.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Cronin, *Subalterns and Social Protest,* 1.
[247] Hobsbawm, "History from Below – Some Reflections," 1988.
[248] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class,* 1963.

developed later by scholars of the Subaltern Studies Group for the purposes of my research, specifically as it pertains to the "domestic" aspect of this project. Hobsbawm writes, "the history of the common people as a special field of study therefore begins with the history of mass movements in the 18th century."[249] This literature is greatly tied to the political project of emancipation as conceptualized by Marxists or socialists. An important part of grassroots history is "what ordinary people remember of big events as distinct from what their betters think they should remember, or what historians can establish as having happened; and insofar as they turn memory into myth, how such myths are formed."[250] Accordingly, this research heavily relies on sources that reflect Iraqi voices as well as capture Iraqis' recollection of the events during and after the invasion in 2003.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in his "Invitation to a Dialogue" (Subaltern Studies IV) claims that the "central aim of the *Subaltern Studies* project is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives."[251] Similarly, Cronin defines subaltern as a term used to refer to "numerically large, even preponderant, groups such as the urban poor, the emerging working class, the peasantry and to smaller but sociologically salient groups such as slum dwellers and the unemployed."[252] Broadly speaking, I use this concept in this research to refer to a wide range of groups who are socially, economically, politically, and ideologically marginalized. This work is especially relevant to my framework as it looks at the ways in which the excluded "might not only resist but sometimes manipulate, negotiate, and collude with the authorities even to the

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[249] Hobsbawm, "History from Below – Some Reflections," 15.
[250] Ibid.,18.
[251] Chakrabarty, "Invitation to a Dialogue," 374.
[252] Cronin, *Subalterns and Social Protest,* 2.

extent of acting as agents of political or social repression."[253] The Italian scholar Antonio

Gramsci wrote, "the history of subaltern classes is inevitably and inextricably intertwined with

the history of civil societies and of states."[254] This framework is helpful because studying those

on the margins not only gives the silenced a voice to narrate their story, but it can also tell us

"about the nature of the powerful, whether classes, regimes, states or economic relationships."[255]

Despite the geographical origins of Subaltern Studies in the south-east Asian socio-political

context, this theoretical approach offers a potential theoretical template from which to extricate

an Iraqi *enunciation* of "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq. For instance, recalling that

contention between and within the major power blocs characterizes current Iraqi politics and

these elites' lack of accountability and representation of and to their constituents, I argue that a

focal shift to "below" can provide us with a more accurate depiction of post-2003 Iraq. It can

also perhaps serve as the potential site for change to occur.

Depending on the definition of the term, Postcolonialism is tied to a political project. This

association is important because it entails the modes of resistance it calls for. Drawing on the

work of postcolonial thinkers, this study concurs with Couze Venn that

> the prefix in Postcoloniality is not meant to signal the end of the
> previous period but to stand for the sign of an emancipatory project, that
> is, it announces a goal yet to be realized: that of dismantling the
> economic, political and social structures and values, the attitudes and
> ideas that appeared with European colonialism and its complex
> combination with capitalism and Western modernity, and it is important
> to add, with pre-existing forms of exploitation.[256]

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[253] Ibid., 3.
[254] Ibid., 18.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Venn, *The Postcolonial Challenge: Towards Alternative Worlds,* 4.

All theoretical frameworks are underpinned by normative and political commitments regardless of their willingness to identify these in their work.[257] In using a postcolonial approach, I am aware of such underlying commitments and the link to an emancipatory political project. Siba Grovogui tells us "postcolonialism aspires to participate in the creation of 'truths,' based on distinct modes of signification and forms of knowledge (or the manners of representations) that advance justice, peace, and political pluralism."[258] It is for this reason that I use this approach, which is informed by a genuine desire and commitment to alter not only the discourses, but also the material conditions of the marginalized. Grovogui also highlights the relationship between freedom and politics, especially in relation to the production of knowledge and policy making.[259] This is related to my normative commitment and is also complemented by a history from below approach to politics, which I discuss below. Most importantly, Postcolonialism entertains and proposes the possibility of *alternatives*. This greatly coincides with this research as I am examining the possibilities for an alternative to the top-down and elite-driven nation-building process in post-2003 Iraq by looking at the potential for grassroots civil society groups to act as a democratizing force.

How, then, can we re-tell the history of the Other? In *Politics of Liberation: A Critical World History,* Enrique Dussel provides an extensive, in both its breadth and analysis, re-reading of history that challenges Hellencentrism, Eurocentrism, and Westernization by re-inserting the globe's forgotten peoples.[260] Dussel does this "from that epistemological location, that of the victims, the south of the planet, the oppressed, excluded, new popular movements, ancestral

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[257] Some theoretical frameworks truly do not see theirs as being shaped by such commitments. Drawing on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 2012 and others, I argue that the belief in the positivist epistemology (neutrality) is an ideology itself.
[258] Grovogui, "Postcolonialism," 248.
[259] Ibid., 247-264.
[260] Dussel, *Politics of Liberation: A Critical World History,* 2011.

people colonized by Modernity, by globalized capitalism…*"[261]* Dussel's work shows how Greek cities like Athens or Sparta were inheritors of "ancient cities, which appeared already in the seventh millennium in Turkey (Catal Huyuk 6385 BCE), Uruk, Lagash and Kish in Mesopotamia, those of the Indus Valley (Mohenjo Daro and Harappa) or in China (Nanking, Canton and Hangzhoi) and from the third millennium BCE in the eastern Mediterranean with ports like Byblos, Sidon, Tyre and its colony Carthage or the Atlantic Cadiz."[262] This means that contrary to contemporary knowledge, ancient Athens is not the birthplace of modernity and Western civilization – the birthplace of democracy, which the rest of the West has inherited and has deemed its mission to *give* to the Other.[263] Dussel's work is an excellent application of a "history from below" framework because it begins with the assertion that in order to begin a politics of liberation, we need to decolonize political history. Specifically, Dussel contends, "we want to break, destroy, de-construct, to formulate a story from a new basis (not just re-construct), that is, 'de-structure' to compose the story from another historical paradigm."[264] In practical terms, this requires a significant shift – or rupture rather, with conventional IR. That is, shifting the *loci of enunciation*[265] from the *state* to *suffering*,[266] which places people – whose lives are continuously affected by international relations – at the centre of our analysis.

Dussel's work is embedded within the philosophical tradition of Liberation, which has a long history dating back to the 1500s. Liberation philosophy "sets out from our particular

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[261] Ibid., 549.
[262] Ibid., 7.
[263] This assertion, especially with relation to Mesopotamia, is echoed in the work of Benjamin Isakhan. See Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse,* 2012; Isakhan, "The Assyrians," 40-49.
[264] Dussel, *Politics of Liberation,* XV.
[265] Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms,'" 213. He identifies the locus of enunciation as the "geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks" in his critique of Westerncentric epistemology.
[266] Drawing on Decoloniality theorists' call to "shift the loci of enunciation" of world politics, I argue a shift to those who suffer not only challenges state-centrism but also places emphasis on the ethical aspect of IR theory to change the material conditions of those suffering on the ground.

regional reality: the increasing poverty of the majority of the Latin American population; dependent capitalism, which transfers value to central capitalism; the growing consciousness of the impossibility of an autonomous philosophy under these circumstances; the existences of different types of oppression…"[267] Inspired by the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the Philosophy of Liberation "allowed us to clearly define the position of 'exteriority' (as a philosophy, as popular culture, as the Latin American economy…) as 'poor,'…"[268] Liberation philosophy, rather than taking what it defines as *oppression* as the natural order of things, asks: "who is situated in the exteriority of the system, and *in the system* as alienated, oppressed?"[269] Oftentimes in conventional theory not all oppressions are identified as such and historical processes, which result in these oppressions, are forgotten. An important example of this is Enloe's significant nuance of labour *made* cheap versus the conventional "cheap labour,"[270] which neglects the historical, economic, and political processes at work that *make* labour "cheap."[271] This approach challenges the Westerncentric claim to universality and objective knowledge or truth by being "conscious of its spatial, historical, social, gendered, racial 'situation.'"[272]

I recognize that postmodern philosophical thought aims to deconstruct this story of modernity as well. However, decoloniality theorists posit that the "'de-construction' of the modern Hegelian macro-story seemed to be no more than an inversion of the same story."[273] A substantial number of critical scholars have made similar arguments to this effect.[274] Politics of Liberation, in sum, also specifically departs from postmodern philosophical thought because

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[267] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation.,* 20.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid., 8.
[270] Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire,* 2004.
[271] This analysis is also limited because it neglects race in the processes by which labour is made cheap.
[272] Dussel, *Politics of Liberation,* 1.
[273] Ibid.
[274] See Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places,* 2009; Chowdhry and Nair, *Power Postcolonialism and International Relations,* 2004; Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics,* 2009.

"they [postmodern philosophers] help us as 'destroyers' but little as 're-constructors'."[275] Grosfoguel makes a persuasive argument in his distinction between subalternity as a postmodern critique, which even if unwittingly, represents a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and subalternity as a decolonial critique, which represents a critique of Eurocentrism from subalternized and silenced knowledges.[276] In short, the decolonization of knowledge requires a serious engagement with the epistemic perspectives from the Global South, situated within "subalternized racial, ethnic, sexual spaces and bodies.[277] In this way, decolonial critique is not meant to simply de-construct, de-stabilize, or disrupt; rather, it is deeply committed to an emancipatory project as conceived by those who have historically been and continue to reside on the margins. It is for this reason that this research project relies on the work of critical Iraqi scholars who are committed to the political project of decoloniality. This research is a small but vital step to engage seriously with the Iraqi perspective on post-2003 Iraq.

1.7 Limitations of Postcolonialism and Subaltern Studies/History from Below

Like any theoretical framework, Postcolonialism is not without its debates, contestations, politics, limitations and critique. For the purpose of this work, I address the most relevant ones to this research. To begin with, there is a debate regarding the definition of the "post" in Postcolonialism.[278] I agree with Chowdhry and Nair, among others, that Postcolonialism does not refer to the end of colonialism, "but rather, that it accurately reflects both the continuity and

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[275] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity,* 4.
[276] Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political Economy Paradigms," 211.
[277] Ibid.
[278] See Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality," 1995; Ranger, "Postscript: Colonial and Postcolonial Identities," 273-280; Shohat, "Notes on the Post-Colonial," 1992; Shome, "Caught in the Term 'Postcolonial': Why the 'Postcolonial' Still Matters," 1998; Chowdhry and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class,* 2004; Abrahamsen, "African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge," 2003.

persistence of colonizing practices, as well as the critical limits and possibilities it has engendered in the present historical moment."[279] There is also a related controversy based on the spatial, geographical and historical markers of the postcolonial. This brings up questions such as whether states like Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are "postcolonial" in the way that India, Ghana and Mexico are. Chowdhry and Nair's response to this question is fruitful; they argue, that a "reflective engagement with the experience of colonization and its power to shape past and current realities at the local, national, and global level is far more useful and constructive." Similarly, Rita Abrahamsen contends that the post in Postcolonialism should not be understood in temporal terms but rather, as an indicator of continuity.[280] Specifically, "it seeks to capture continuities and complexities of any historical period and attempts to transcend strict chronological and dichotomous thinking where history is clearly delineated and the social world neatly categorized in separate boxes."[281] The colonial encounter marks a crucial re-ordering of the world, making it impossible to return to a pre-colonial culture; the pre-colonial did not come to an end, rather, the present is a complex mix and continuation of different cultures and temporalities.[282] This constitutive relationship of the West and its Other is a key insight of Postcolonialism that is useful in analyzing the current relationship between the Global North and the Global South.

Some scholars have charged that postcolonial approaches are equivalent to "excuses" to blame the West for the failures of the Global South. Moreover, the lack of agency of the non-Western countries is cited as a critique of this approach.[283] I acknowledge the existence of such

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[279] Chowdhry and Nair, *Power Postcolonialism and International Relations,* 11.
[280] Abrahamsen, "African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge," 2003.
[281] Ibid.,195.
[282] Abrahamsen, "African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge," 196.
[283] Both the first and second waves of Modernization Theories focused on endogenous factors – namely, culture, to explain the lack of development in the Global South. However, this is a naïve and ahistorical critique. Critical

apologetic arguments however, serious scholars of critical postcolonial/decolonial thought do not

agree with this approach. Rather than blaming the West for the ills of the Global South, the point

of critical Postcolonialism is to historicize and contextualize the agency of the Global South in

the postcolonial era within a system of unequal power relations that favours the Global North.

This challenges the problematic notions of conventional literature that cite the *culture* of the

Global South as the reasons for its lack of democracy, violence, or civil strife by acknowledging

the historical processes of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism.

Some critical scholars such as Hamid Dabashi discuss the "end of postcolonialism."[284]

He declares, "we are, in my view, finally overcoming the condition we have termed 'coloniality'

and, a *fortiori,* 'postcoloniality.'"[285] He is critical of a historical condition which created various

forms of postcolonial discourses and ideologies such as Arab nationalism, third world socialism,

and Islamism as a response and reaction to postcolonial socio-political conditions. In sum, all

these ideologies are exhausted and do not represent the peoples' demands. He cites the slogans

chanted in Tahrir Square – "Freedom, Social Justice, Dignity" – as a signal of the end of the

condition of coloniality; "these revolutionary uprisings are post-ideological, meaning they are no

longer fighting according to terms dictated by their condition of coloniality, codenamed

'postcolonial.'"[286] Indeed, Dabashi's work is an acknowledgement of the limits of the ideologies

of Arab nationalism and third world socialism used by some Global South leaders such as

Saddam Hussein to justify their brutality and to ignore pluralism or democracy as a Western

construct and in effect, perpetuate postcolonial conditions. In my view, the critical

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Postcolonialism is pointing to the pivotal role played by exogenous factors such as colonialism and the global
capitalist system along with domestic factors in their understandings of Global South politics.
[284] Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism,* 2012.
[285] Ibid., 32.
[286] Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism,* 33.

Postcolonialism I draw on for this research is not incompatible with Dabashi; however, post-2003 Iraqi politics were largely shaped by a foreign occupying power, which means the regime change in Iraq was not the result of an organic or grassroots revolution or uprising against Saddam Hussein. That is not to say that Iraqi elites are not to blame for their mistakes, corruption and perpetuation of fragmentary policies of sectarianism. However, it is important to examine the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between international and domestic actors in the case of post-2003 Iraq, which is one of the objectives of this study.

In sum, critical postcolonial/decolonial and Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches are used in this research to first, historicize and contextualize concepts such as "sectarianism," which has been cited as the biggest impediment to the "democratic nation-building" project the United States undertook in 2003. This framing of Iraqi society as inherently sectarian and of the violence in post-2003 Iraq as a civil war, resulting from Iraqi society's sectarian nature is problematized in this research. This framing is a by-product of American analysists and policymakers' perception or understanding of Iraqi society;[287] the relations between this binary of American "liberalism" and Iraqi "sectarianism" can be deconstructed using critical postcolonial/decolonial thought. This approach is also useful for problematizing the role of the invasion and occupation policies in examining what went wrong in post-2003 Iraq. The link between coloniality and the process of knowledge production allows us to make *particular* what has been rendered *universal*. In this way, we can explore grassroots, democratization from "below" that can be representative, inclusive and perhaps more successful than the foreign-led, top-down model, which has failed in Iraq. This research also aims to shift

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[287] Even prior to the invasion, sectarianism was cited as a potential obstacle to democratizing Iraq. See Strauss, "Attacking Iraq," 2002; Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities," 2003; Diamond, "Can Iraq Become a Democracy?" 2003.

the conventional focus from *states* to *people;* accordingly, Subaltern/history from below approaches are useful to re-telling the story from the perspective of ordinary Iraqis, who have borne the brunt of this War. This challenges the mainstream analyses focused on the national security of states, the costs of the war financially or militarily and other state-centric justifications for the invasion and explanations of the failures of the "democratic nation-building" project in post-2003 Iraq.

1.8 Research Methodology

In this study, I use three interrelated methods: critical discourse analysis, archival research and semi-structured interviews. Each is underpinned by the theoretical frameworks I outlined in the previous section. The postcolonial approach emphasizes discourse as knowledge; as a method, critical discourse analysis is "principally concerned with the role of discourse in enacting, reproducing, and resisting social power abuse, dominance, and inequality."[288] This study explores the "relationship between discourse and reality"[289] in the particular context of the case of Iraq. Specifically, I conduct a discourse analysis informed by a postcolonial/decolonial perspective to problematize the invasion, occupation and "democratic nation-building" model, which has largely depended on a binary opposition between two historical discourses: the discourse of "western democracy, which marks the West as the hallmark of the modern, civilized and democratic world"[290] and the Orientalist discourse which "constructs the East as its antithesis, the backward, barbaric and despotic nether region."[291] The archival research and semi-structured interviews are underpinned by Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches,

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[288] Van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 352.
[289] Halperin and Heath, *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills,* 313.
[290] Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq,* 23.
[291] Ibid.

which offer a counter-story to the conventional narrative of what went wrong in post-2003 Iraq by inserting Iraqi voices and perspectives. Chapter two, in particular, offers an examination of how we can re-tell the story from the point of view of the Other by re-inserting the marginalized.

1.8.1   Critical Discourse Analysis

This research project uses critical discourse analysis in chapter three in particular, which focuses on the impact of the global context of the Iraqi crisis. This chapter examines the dialectical relationship between the international and the domestic by contextualizing the invasion of Iraq as part of the global War on Terror. To that end, I analyze specific documents to identify *security narratives*. This method is directly linked to my theoretical framework, which entails, Epstein writes, "a commitment to a situated research (Haraway 1991) that starts from a particular set of social relations within particular 'regimes of practice' (Foucault 1991, 75) and works from the ground up, progressively unearthing power's particular modes of exertion within it."[292]

Milliken outlines three theoretical claims of discourse analysis as 1) discourses as systems of signification (predicate analysis), 2) discourse productivity, and 3) the play of practice.[293] I address each aspect of discourse research in the following way:

1. *Predicate Analysis* focuses on the language practices of prediction. Predictions of a noun construct the thing named as a particular sort of thing, with particular features and capacities.[294] This method is suitable for analyzing the documents I have chosen because I am able to identify how Iraq is constructed through this discourse in relation to the US.

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[292] Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations,* 4.
[293] Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 1999.
[294] Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 1999.

In this way, I can analyze how these relations serve as a frame for defining certain subject

identities.[295]

I have identified the following words, references, and statements as the *discourse frame*: rogue

state, evil, weapons of mass destruction, security threat, national interest, liberation, and

democracy promotion. This contributed to historicizing and contextualizing the invasion of Iraq

in 2003 by the US in the international level of analysis.

I have used a critical discourse analysis in the study of the following documents: statements to

congress, congressional committees, relevant think tank reports, public addresses, Pentagon

reports.

2. *Issues of Productivity* focus on explaining how a discourse *produces* this world; that is,

> how it selectively constitutes some and not others as 'privileged
> storytellers…to whom narrative authority…is granted', how it renders
> logical and proper certain policies by authorities and in the
> implementation of those policies shapes and changes people's modes and
> conditions of living, and how it comes to be dispersed beyond authorized
> subjects to make up common sense for many in everyday society.[296]

This research project specifically focuses on the study of American foreign policy under

President George W. Bush. I have narrowed the focus to these documents because as Milliken

astutely argues, Foreign Policy studies analyze how an elite's "regime of truth" makes possible

certain courses of action by a state while simultaneously excluding other policies as

inappropriate and unintelligible.[297] Through a critical discourse analysis of the aforementioned

documents, the third chapter demonstrates the mechanisms through which invading Iraq and

"regime change" became the only appropriate and intelligible foreign policy option to the Bush

administration. The years of 2008 to 2016 were excluded from this critical discourse analysis. I

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[295] Ibid., 233.
[296] Campbell, *Politics Without Principles: Sovereignty, Ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf War,* 7.
[297] Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 1999.

focused on the Bush administration in this chapter because the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 was undertaken during his terms in office. This chapter is primarily concerned with analyzing the lead up to the decision to invade Iraq in order to highlight the reciprocal and dialectical relationship between international and domestic politics in the case of Iraq. Also, President Barack Obama was elected in 2008 and inaugurated in January 2009, at which point the discourse shifted to pulling out of Iraq as per his campaign promise to end the occupation.

3. *Play of practice* addresses how the order of international society is "inherently contingent, entailing that its orderliness needs to be worked for it to be reproduced."[298] This research employs a combination of the *juxtaposition* and *subjugated knowledges* methods in order, first, to render visible the ambiguous interpretation of state practices and to demonstrate the inherently political nature of official discourses,[299] and second, to explore alternative accounts of the war on Iraq to show "how the subjugated knowledge itself works to create conditions for resistance to a dominating discourse."[300] In other words, it shows how this alternative is excluded or silenced by the dominant discourse. This is particularly useful for the reconstructive aspect of this research – to retell the story of post-2003 Iraq from the "ground."

Maarten Hajer's concept of "discourse coalition" is also very useful. He defines discourse coalition as a "group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time."[301] Drawing on his work, I look at the following two interrelated "actors" that framed a discourse of invading Iraq in 2003. The purpose here is to examine how these came together to support the invasion of Iraq.

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[298] Ibid., 242.
[299] Campbell, *Politics Without Principles,* 1993.
[300] Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 243.
[301] Hajer, "Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning," 70.

1. Official government: President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defence Don Rumsfeld, and Director of CIA George Tenet.

2. Official reports from the Pentagon and Defense documents

Milliken contends that discourses define subjects who are authorized to speak and act such as officials, intellectuals, and experts.[302] As such, I chose these actors based on their positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Director of most significant intelligence agency. The Pentagon's reports are extremely important because they reveal the official documents of the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Defense.

1.8.2 Archival Research

I have used archival research in chapter two in order to outline a brief history of the modern Iraqi state and to historicize the process of nation-building in modern Iraq (1930-2003). Using the "history from below" framework, this chapter re-inserts indigenous minorities, the Assyrians and Yezidis as well as other vulnerable minorities of Iraq such as Yezidis, Turkomans, Armenians, Shabak, and Mandaeans into the story of Iraq, demonstrating pluralism and the rich cultural and historical legacy of Iraq.

For my archival research, I accessed the *Hizb al-Ba'th al- 'Arabi al-Ishtiraki Records* (Ba'ath Party Records) and *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* (Iraq Memory Foundation) at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives located at Stanford University, Stanford CA in March 2015.

1.8.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

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[302] Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 1999.

I conducted *semi-structured interviews* with Iraqi experts and civil society members, both official and unofficial or loosely-defined. They were chosen due to their expertise and/or direct engagement with the nation-building processes after 2003. Six out of nine of the research participants are activists. Four out of the nine hold a doctorate in a relevant field of study and were chosen based on their knowledge of Iraqi politics, processes of democratization, Iraqi society, and the Middle East region. The findings from the interviews serve as the basis for chapter four, which focuses on the domestic context of the post-invasion period. The following is a brief highlight of each research participant:

1. **Abbas Alwadi**, **activist.** Alwadi was in his third year of university in majoring in languages until his studies were interrupted by the 2003 invasion. He began to work as a journalist in 2006 for Iraqi magazines and newspapers as a freelance writer. Born and raised in Iraq, he was living in Baghdad at the time of the invasion and occupation. Due to threats on his life for his journalism and civil activism, he escaped Iraq in 2012. He arrived in his current city of Toronto, Canada in 2014, where he has continued his activism as a member of a cross-sectarian, anti-sectarian youth movement called Yes2Iraq. He was selected as a participant due to his civic engagement in his community and because he provides an ordinary youth's perspective to the invasion and occupation from Baghdad.

2. **Adeed Dawisha**, **PhD.** Dawisha has been a member of Miami University's Department of Political Science since 2000. He was born in Baghdad, Iraq and educated in England where he received his PhD from the London School of Economics. His research interests include the application of theories of democratic transitions and consolidation to the Middle East. He was selected to participate because he provided a different perspective

than the other research participants. For example, he was not opposed to the invasion of Iraq because as an Iraqi who fled, he believed Saddam Hussein's regime would not end without international intervention. However, his strong ties to Iraq through family, organizations, and colleagues rapidly changed his perspective to oppose the occupation.

3. **Ali Khalaf**, **activist.** Khalaf is a member of *Yazda*- Iraq branch, which is a Yazidi organization established in the aftermath of the Yazidi genocide in 2014 to support their community in three areas: humanitarian aid, advocacy and community building. Born and raised in Iraq, he currently resides in Dohuk, Iraq and works on the documentation project, making field visits, documenting mass graves and testimonies of survivors. Ali was selected for an interview because he represents a marginalized community in Iraq and his civil activism within and behalf of the Yazidi community. He also provided an account of the invasion and occupation from the north of Iraq.

4. **Nadje Al-Ali, PhD/activist.** Al-Ali teaches at the Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS University of London. She specializes in women and gender issues in the Middle East, particularly Iraq and Egypt. She was involved in the anti-sanctions movement in the 1990s, as a founder of Women's Action for Iraq. She also campaigned against military intervention, arguing that military intervention will not result in democracy or liberation. Dr. Ali was selected to participate in this study due to her expertise in gender issues in Iraq, her considerable ethnographic work with women in Iraq and her activist work in the UK and Iraq.

5. **Sa'ad Jawad, PhD/activist.** Jawad taught at the University of Baghdad for more than thirty years in the Political Science department. His research interests include Iraqi Kurds, the 2003 War and its effect on the Middle East. Born and raised in Iraq, he left

Iraq due to the rampant insecurity and joined the Middle East Centre as a Senior Vising Fellow at the London School of Economics in December 2010. I selected Dr. Jawad for an interview because he provided an account of the invasion and occupation from the ground and was heavily involved in civil activism. While he is an elite in comparison to the ordinary Iraqi, he represents a marginalized Iraqi when compared to the occupying forces in control of "rebuilding Iraq" and the exiles who were supported by the occupying forces. His and his colleagues' exclusion from advisory roles for example, shows the occupying forces' failure to take advantage of Iraq's human resources to rebuild the country.

6. **Savina Dawood, activist.** Dawood is an Assyrian activist from the north of Iraq. She left Iraq in 2015 to begin her MA studies in Human Rights and Political Science in Germany. She was a member of various civil society organizations, including the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union, Assyrian Cultural Club, Demand for Action, and International Youth Democratic Union. She was 14 years old at the beginning of the war and was in the north, which is part of the KRG. This means the war and occupation were drastically different from Baghdad or the south. She was heavily involved in political activism, especially after the dispossession of Assyrians to the north from various parts of Iraq. Like Ali Khalaf, Savina was selected to participate in this study because she is a civically engaged youth from a marginalized community, the Assyrians.

7. **Yanar Mohammed, activist.** Mohammed is a feminist who is originally from Baghdad, Iraq and is the co-founder and director of the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), which is a cross-sectarian organization. This organization operates six safety houses for women, including in Kirkuk, Nasiriyah, Bagdad and the north. She left Iraq in

2008 due to the security situation and threats to her safety due to her activism. However, she frequently returns to Iraq for her work with OWFI. She also serves as the editor of the newspaper *Al-Mousawat*. Yanar was selected as a research participant because of her extensive work with a vulnerable population during the invasion and occupation. She was among the only women working in the political arena without the support of a US-backed political party and provided substantial insights into the governing structure of the new Iraq and politics.

8. **Zaid Al-Ali, UN legal advisor.** Al-Ali is an Iraqi lawyer specializing in comparative constitutional law and international commercial arbitration. He was born in exile and returned to Iraq to serve as a legal adviser to the United Nations in Iraq from 2005 to 2010 in Baghdad, outside of the Green Zone. He was selected as a participant because his experience living with his family members outside of the Green Zone and his intimate knowledge of the constitution writing process and the workings of the Interim Governing Council provided this study with critical insight into Iraqis' understandings of the occupation, federalism, sectarianism, violence and politics post-2003.

9. **Zyad Saeed, PhD/UN legal advisor.** Saeed obtained a PhD 2010 in International Law from the University of Baghdad where he focused on human rights under occupation. He served as a legal advisor in 2004 in Baghdad, Iraq until 2007 where he joined the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Iraq as a legal advisor in Arbil. He has never lived inside the Green Zone or outside of Iraq. Dr. Saeed was selected to participate in this study because he provided a perspective from both Baghdad and the north and a marginalized perspective within the Constitution Writing Committee as an Iraqi legal specialist and activist who was not supported by a political party, US-backed or not.

These interviews provide an Iraqi perspective of the current situation in Iraq, including the 2003 invasion, occupation, de-Ba'athification process, outbursts of violence among various groups, and the emergence and politics of radical groups like ISIS. Most work on Iraq does not fully include Iraqi perspectives; oftentimes, this is in part due to the security concerns related to doing fieldwork in Iraq or because most of the conventional literature on Iraq uncritically and ineffectively applies concepts such as federalism, post-conflict societies, reconstruction, and power-sharing to study post-2003 Iraq. This dissertation attempts to offer an Iraqi *enunciation* of the process of "democratic nation-building" that began after the forceful removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003 by a foreign imperial power. The decision to shift the *loci of enunciation* from the Global North or unrepresentative elites is largely inspired by a desire to look at the margins. As I fleshed out in the theoretical framework, a focus on the periphery can potentially provide a more accurate depiction of the politics on the ground.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter began with a critical overview of the international context in order to historicize the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 as part of the Global War on Terror. The first section critically examines the Bush Doctrine by analyzing the post-Cold War system, the literature on "clash of civilizations," the "rogue states" policy of the 1990s, and contemporary neoconservative ideology and the promotion of democracy rooted in discourses such as Fukuyama's "end of history." The immediate post-2003 period was characterized by chaos and violence. This prompted the topic of the next section: the "solutions" offered by conventional literature for the problems encountered in "democratizing" Iraq. This included the debates on federalism between consociationalism (along ethno-religious lines) and integrationist approaches

(along administrative lines). I argued this approach was limited as it understood "sectarian" identities in Iraq as *primordial* and inherent to Iraqi society, failing to acknowledge or problematize the invasion and occupation policies, which *sectarianized* the post-2003 political sphere in Iraq. The literature advocating a power-sharing model is related to federalism and shared similar limitations. Namely, this approach failed to problematize what is perhaps the most damaging legacy of the occupation – the institutionalization of sectarianism in post-2003 Iraqi politics. Finally, I outlined briefly conflict resolution approaches, which in addition to exhibiting the same limitations regarding "sectarianism," focused predominantly on major power blocs and democratization through elites. This is problematic because these "blocs" are understood as homogenous groups, without paying attention to the contestations, debates and varying interests within and among them beyond the lens of "sectarianism." Moreover, this approach ignored the marginalized *others* of Iraqi society because they do not constitute a majority.

In response to the apparent failures of the occupation policies in democratizing Iraq, conventional scholarship also provided critiques. These critiques of the occupation were largely depicted or framed as "mistakes," "oversights," or "short-comings." I argued that these criticisms were unsubstantial because their point of departure was state-centric and US-centric. This means they were interested in the costs of the war for the US and "mistakes" by coalition forces or the CPA. This is reflected in their "solutions" for these perceived "mistakes," which included an increase of military forces on the ground, multilateralism or withdrawal from Iraq. In contrast, I drew on critical scholarship to argue for a shift from the focus on the US *state* to the Iraqis suffering on the ground. This changes the issues of concern but also allows for a more critical understanding of post-2003 Iraq within the context of the invasion and occupation. Specifically, this problematizes the understanding of Iraqi society as "sectarian" or the framing of post-2003

Iraqi politics as civil war. Rather, I argued that the violence in post-2003 Iraq can be situated as structural violence resulting from a foreign military invasion and occupation. Moreover, the "solutions" can be an alternative to the top-down, elite-driven, foreign-led model of democratization.

There were critical analyses of "what went wrong" in Iraq as well, which were outlined in the next section. The overview of this critical scholarship demonstrated that despite their problematization of the invasion, some scholars such as Allawi and Herring and Rangwala, were still embedded within a "sectarian" framework. However, other critical scholars such as Ismael and Fuller and Ismael, S., argued that the "sectarianism" in Iraq was manufactured directly as a result of the occupation policies imposed on Iraq. I briefly discussed this framework because the following chapters in this study will elaborate on these critical Iraqis scholars' work. This section also highlighted literature that focused on the "economic" factor and oil in the role of the invasion and occupation policies of neoliberalization. I argued that these perspectives were important but failed to challenge the *sectarianization* of Iraqi politics after 2003, which was a large focus of this work. I critically examine the neoliberalization of Iraq under the occupation in chapter three.

This chapter then moved to discuss the theoretical approaches of critical postcolonial/decolonial thought and Subaltern Studies/history from below underpinning this study. I emphasized three interrelated aspects of critical postcolonial approaches, including subjectivity and othering, the link between colonialism and knowledge production, and modes of resistance. I argued that highlighting the role of discourse as an exercise of power, which shape the way we think about, write about and talk about the Other, can help us understand how violence is perpetuated in the international system. For example, the construction of Iraq as a

security threat through *discourse* helped pave a policy solution of "regime change" through military force.

Inayatullah and Blaney's understanding of "difference" was examined to understand the drive for the global promotion of democracies as outlined by democratic peace theories and neoliberal interventionists. That is, the concern with producing "sameness" in the international system to ensure peace via order is useful to understanding the justifications for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Relatedly, Agathangelou and Ling's conceptualization of violence in the international system as precipitated by a binary of "self" vs. "other," were used to critically situate the policy of regime change as the only viable response to a perceived Iraqi security threat. Postcolonial theories' deconstruction of the process of knowledge production within colonial modernity was also highlighted in this section. I argued that understanding this link between colonialism and knowledge is important to this study because it allows us to problematize the knowledges underlying the conventional understandings of post-2003 Iraq such as "sectarianism" or "exceptionalism." Moreover, it allows us to challenge the conventional understandings of "us" as the owners of democracy and "them" as exceptionally incapable of democracy. Finally, I linked postcolonial theories' emphasis on resistance with Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches as potential acts of resistance. That is, I argued that re-reading histories from the perspective of the Other according to these approaches such as through the work of Dussel or Isakhan can be acts of epistemic resistance. In addition to this, critical postcolonial theories allow for the possibility of change, which is useful for my examination of a grassroots, democracy from "below" model as an alternative to the elite-driven, foreign-led "democratic nation-building" model imposed on post-2003 Iraq.

In sum, critical postcolonial/decolonial and Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches are used in this study to first, historicize and contextualize concepts such as "sectarianism," which has been identified in the conventional literature as the biggest impediment to the "democratic nation-building" project in post-2003 Iraq. This framing of Iraqi society as inherently sectarian and relatedly, of the violence in post-2003 Iraq in terms of a civil war, is problematized in this research. I argued that this framing is a by-product of American analysists and policymakers' perception or (mis)understanding of Iraqi society. The relations between this binary of American "liberalism" and Iraqi "sectarianism" can be deconstructed using critical postcolonial/decolonial thought. I also argued that this approach is useful for problematizing the role of the invasion and occupation policies in critically examining what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq. Second, the link between coloniality and the process of knowledge production allows us to make *particular* what has been made *universal*. In this way, we can explore grassroots, democratization from "below" that can be representative, inclusive and perhaps more successful than the foreign-led, top-down model, which has failed in Iraq. Most importantly, this chapter has outlined the aim to shift the conventional focus from *states* to *people;* accordingly, I argued that Subaltern/history from below approaches are useful to re-telling the story from the perspective of ordinary Iraqis, who have been the ultimate "losers" of this War. This challenges the mainstream analyses focused on the national security of states, the costs of the war financially or militarily and other state-centric justifications for the invasion and explanations of the failures of the "democratic nation-building" project in post-2003 Iraq.

Finally, this chapter outlined the research methods used to undertake this study in relation to the theoretical approaches of critical Postcolonialism and Subaltern/history from below. I used critical discourse analysis to analyze Official speeches made by President Bush, influential

research institutes' policy recommendations, and defense documents in chapter three. I also used this method to analyze the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. As part of the shift to the margins or "below" underpinning Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches, I used critical scholarship and archival data for chapter two to first, challenge the conventional story of "sectarianism" as inherent to Iraqi society and second, to re-tell the story of Iraqis, especially those forgotten or excluded *others.* Finally, the third method used to conduct this research was semi-structured interviews with Iraqi specialists and civil society practitioners. These were conducted in order to partially provide an *Iraqi* perspective on what "went wrong in Iraq." The goal of re-telling the story of post-2003 Iraq from the perspective of the Other is underpinned by my theoretical perspectives.

The following chapter provides a brief history of the modern state of Iraq. This historical context is vital to understanding the roles of the international, regional and domestic in why "democratic nation-building" in post-2003 Iraq failed. This chapter challenges the sole focus on endogenous factors such as "sectarianism" or Orientalist ideas of "exceptionalism" in conventional literature to understand what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq.

Chapter Two: History from Below – Beyond Iraqi Exceptionalism

> We coexisted peacefully for centuries, and need neither
> brutal dictators nor western intervention.
>
> **Sami Ramadani,** ***The Guardian,*** **June 2014**

2.1 Introduction

Present-day Iraq geographically sits on the site of ancient Mesopotamia. Frequently referred to as the cradle of civilization, historians and political analysts alike are quick to outline

Mesopotamia's contributions to the modern world, including the "birthplace of writing, developments in the arts and sciences, and the emergence of social, political and economic institutions."[303] The area known as the Middle East was socio-politically reconfigured into nation-states by Western powers following the First World War. Specifically, a series of agreements such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Treaty of Sèvres, and the Treaty of Lausanne between major European powers determined the existing borders of many Middle Eastern countries, including the geographical territory that became the modern state of Iraq. Historically, this territory has been home to many peoples, including Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Shabak, Yazidis, Mandaeans, Armenians, Jews, Circassians, and Kawilya, "with a myriad of patterns of interaction interconnecting the diverse peoples of the area through space and time."[304]

As such, rather than one *nation*, the Iraqi *state* is home to many ethnicities and religions. Citing Iraq's "lack of a cohesive identity" as one of the impediments to democratization in Iraq, Byman notes that Iraq's population is "predominantly Muslim, divided between Shi'as (60-65 percent) and Sunnis (32 percent)."[305] In addition, although most Iraqis are "Arabs," approximately, 20 percent of the population is Kurdish; another 5 percent are Turkomans, Assyrian, or members of other minority groups[306] – that are left unmentioned. Since the invasion and the subsequent War, the demographics of Iraq have greatly shifted. This is due to movement within the country (internally displaced persons), refugee flows to neighbouring countries and abroad, and political conditions, in which violent militias have secured various "neighbourhoods," cementing sectarian division of society spatially. That is, the *sectarianization*

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[303] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 13.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities," 64.
[306] Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities," 64.

of Iraq "has reduced formerly mixed communities into Shi'a and Sunni enclaves"[307] outside of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which the governing parties have been working to secure as a Kurdish quasi-independent state. These conditions have made reliable demographic data of Iraq very difficult to ascertain; however, the dwindling number of vulnerable minorities has been widely reported.[308]

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, this rich diversity has been used in a simplistic and reductionist way to account for the failure of American democratic nation-building efforts. That is, the conventional literature on post-2003 Iraq and its inability to transition to a democracy has predominantly focused on endogenous factors; namely, Iraq's "sectarian problem" and "Arab exceptionalism." Put simply, the democratic nation-building project in Iraq has failed due to sectarianism, which is seen as inherent to Iraqi society due to its diversity and colonial inception. Relatedly, Arab culture is seen to be intrinsically inimical to democracy, which is perceived to be a Western good that needs to be imposed on Iraqi society from above and/or outside. Both arguments are problematic and rest on Western-centric notions or perceptions of Iraqi society and politics.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: the first aim is to challenge these ideas by problematizing "sectarianism" and "sectarian violence" through an examination of the Anglo-American intervention and nation-building. This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the conventional literature on the current story of Iraqi society as mainly comprised of Sunni and Shi'a Arabs and Kurds, highlighting their inability to cooperate due to irreconcilable ethnic and

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[307] Lamani, "Minorities in Iraq: The Other Victims," 4.
[308] See Mamouri, "al'Iraq Yashhadon Nzoohan Jama'iyan Jadeedan…wa al'Aqliyatihi 'la Tareeq Altalashee" (Iraq is Witnessing a New Mass Exodus…Minorities are on the Road to Vanishing), 2015; Pichon, "Minorities in Iraq – Pushed to the Brink of Existence," 2015; Puttick, "From Crisis to Catastrophe: the Situation of Minorities in Iraq," 2014 (Also available in Arabic: "*min al'Aazmat 'ila Karithaat: Wathi' al'Aqaliat fi al'Iraq*); Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, "Iraq: The Situation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities," 2013; Lamani, "Minorities in Iraq: The Other Victims," 2009.

sectarian differences. The predominant literature cites "sectarianism" as one of the most problematic factors that has led to the failure of democratic nation-building in post-2003 Iraq. The chapter demonstrates why this analysis is ahistorical and lacks context. State-building policies need to consider historical processes that have led to the current context. This means that we need to understand the impact of British nation-building during the colonial period to discuss sectarian relations in Iraq today. The state-building models of all regimes following the British period must also be analyzed. A postcolonial approach problematizes the influence and role of the British and other foreign powers as well as the top-down process of state-building in modern Iraq. The process of "making" Iraq was mostly not inclusive or reflective of Iraqi society and its political aspirations. As will be shown, historicising and contextualizing a traumatized process of state-building in Iraq nullifies the Orientalist discourse of Iraqi exceptionalism, meaning Iraqis are exceptionally immune to democratic values and institutions. Similarly, historical context allows us to analyze the failures of American nation-building in post-2003. However, a critical postcolonial analysis of American occupation policies helps us to understand the sectarian violence, the emergence of ISIS, and the current political situation within the context of a violent invasion and occupation. This is not to say that Iraqis have no agency; rather, this chapter aims to show the interrelation between endogenous and exogenous factors at work inside the Iraqi state.

The second aim of this chapter is to counter a common and mostly unquestioned narrative of Iraqi history.[309] It calls for the re-insertion of the Others of Iraqi society to tell a more inclusive and reflexive story of Iraq. For example, the state-building model of the Ba'ath Party (1968-2003), in particular, was based on Arab nationalism, a European model of constructing a

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[309] See Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2007; Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State,* 2012; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq,* 2012; Dodge, *Iraq's Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change*, 2012; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, 2001.

nation-state. That is, Iraq's nation-building project, as all modern nation-building projects, attempted to construct a homogenous national identity through the exclusion of Other segments of society. One such mechanism was enacting policies aimed at re-writing the history of the Iraqi state to construct an exclusively Arab national identity. This historical revisionism has obstructed the myriad ways that coloniality has operated in Iraq as British and American occupation and colonial policies have been discussed at the cost of marginalizing other elements of colonialism and issues in Iraqi politics.[310] While it is true that under Saddam Hussein (and even before him) Shi'a Arabs and Kurds were marginalized or relegated to the role of "opposition" in Iraqi politics, they were not *erased* from the story. However, Assyrians and Yazidis, among others were left out of the Iraqi story/history. Some elites from ethnic and religious groups participated in Iraqi politics but their participation did not necessarily represent the interest of their people and communities. The scholarship on post-2003 Iraq largely focuses on the interests and concerns of the major players in post-2003. Since much has been written to re-insert the story of the Iraqi Kurds and Shi'a Arabs who were previously excluded or marginalized,[311] this chapter specifically focuses on those who remain invisible, or in the Gramscian sense, the *subaltern* of Iraqi society.

This chapter, in sum, begins with an examination and critique of the literature on sectarianism in Iraq and the idea of Arab exceptionalism. A historical context is vital to understanding the current state of sectarian relations in Iraq and why it has not transitioned to a

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[310] For example, the history of the Assyrians, who are indigenous to Iraq, whose history in the modern state of Iraq involving conquest, persecution, marginalization and occupation of their ancestral lands has largely been left out of the story of Iraq. This also applies to Yazidis and Mandaeans who are also indigenous to what is today called Iraq as well as Shabak and Turkomans.

[311] See Berlatsky, *The Kurds,* 2013; Human Rights Watch, *Genocide In Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds,* 1993; Noorbaksh, "Shiism and Ethnic Politics in Iraq," 2008; Kelly, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide,* 2008; Tapper, "Massacre Highlights Saddam's Reign of Terror," 2006; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 2003; Sharp, "Iraq's 'Devastated' Marsh Arabs," 2003; Wood, "Saddam Drains the Life of the Marsh Arabs," 1993; Amnesty International, "Iraq 'Disappearance' of Shi'a Clerics and Students," 1993.

stable democracy. I then juxtapose the state-building models of both the British in the 1920s and the Americans in 2003. This also helps to contextualize the sectarianism plaguing contemporary Iraq. More importantly, I argue why this top-down, external and imperial model of nation-building cannot work to truly democratize a country. The final part of this chapter uses archival data from the Hoover Institution and the Iraq Memory Foundation to provide an understanding of the Ba'ath regime. This is important to understand the dynamics between the different communities that make up Iraq. The Ba'ath period is highlighted because it is arguably, the most distorting and traumatic state-building period in Iraq's history.

Using a "history from below" approach, this chapter attempts to re-tell the story of modern Iraq by re-inserting peoples who have been excluded but also to show how the Ba'ath state-building programme was founded on violence and exclusions. It is important to emphasize that while nationalism and nation-building are inherently violent processes and have been so in most contexts, this is not an apt description of post-2003 Iraq. Iraq's experience with violent nationalism occurred during the Ba'ath period. However, the label of the violence in post-2003 Iraq as sectarian is inaccurate. Drawing on the work of critical Iraqi scholars, I argue that this violence is systemic within the context of an Anglo-American invasion and occupation. Moreover, an understanding of the way in which identities are *politicized* during times of crisis or conflict renders a more accurate picture of events.

2.2 The Current Story of Iraq: "Sectarianism" and "Arab Exceptionalism"

Much of the literature on post-2003 Iraq has focused on the failure of Iraqi national unity and the problem of ethnic division. The idea of Iraqi national fragmentation has served as a precursor to a discussion of *why* democracy has not taken root in post-2003 Iraq. Specifically,

much of the conventional literature on contemporary Iraq depicts sectarianism as a natural

phenomenon essential to Iraqi society and as predominantly responsible for the violence, which

has characterized Iraqi politics and society post-invasion. While diversity of sects as well as

economic and political competition among these sects are a reality in Iraq, these two factors,

contrary to what this literature depicts, do not necessarily and naturally have to result in violence

or fragmentation of the Iraqi state. Further, without historical and political context of this

phenomenon, we are left with an essentialist explanation of Iraqis as inherently incapable of

building or sustaining a democracy. Related to this, are the ideas of Arab exceptionalism and

Arab disposition to authoritarianism.[312] This is manifested in one way through the idea that Iraqis

needed a strongman like Saddam Hussein to hold the "nation" together. It is this primordial

discourse on sect or ethnicity as *a priori* and as leading unavoidably to animosity that this

chapter seeks to contest.

To begin, there are three traditions from which the definition of "sectarianism" is drawn.

In the *primordial* model, sectarianism is attributed to deep-seated historical traditions that define

ethno-confessional communities by shaping the core elements of their social and cultural identity

(Connor 1994; Geertz 1963; Smith 1986).[313] Conversely, in *constructivist* models, sectarian

identities are conceptualized as socially determined rather than "innate" and often differ across

generations.[314] The critique of the constructivist model is related to the way in which it implies

that sectarian identities disappear once the negative forces causing groups to think in sectarian

terms are eliminated.[315] For Davis, the "instrumental quality of this approach has encouraged the

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[312] For a discussion of Middle East exceptionalism in the literature, see Arab Studies Journal (Special Issue: Middle East Exceptionalism), Volume 6. Washington: Arab Studies Institute; For a critique of Middle East exceptionalism, see Malak and Salem, "Reorientalizing the Middle East: The Power Agenda Setting Post-Arab Uprisings," 2015; Hariri, "A Contribution to the Understanding of Middle Eastern and Muslim Exceptionalism," 2015.
[313] Davis, "Introduction: The Question of Sectarian Identities in Iraq," 230.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid.

application of rational choice theory to the study of sectarian identities in which they are viewed

as the outcome of a rational calculus promoted by sectarian entrepreneurs."[316] Critical scholars

writing about sectarianism in Iraq today reject both models as they are both "reductionist and

cannot stand alone as theoretical models; the problem with both these models is their

unidimensional nature."[317] Instead, scholars such as Alnasseri,[318] Ismael and Fuller,[319] Davis,[320]

Khoury,[321] and Haddad[322] argue that sectarian identities must be historically contextualized and

analyzed in a dynamic way in order to have truly meaningful explanatory power. It is within this

latter camp that I situate my understanding of sectarian relations in Iraq. I reject the term

sectarianism as it is inextricably linked with the Orientalist idea of Arab exceptionalism or

violence and has no real explanatory power. That is, "to ask if Iraqi society is 'sectarian' or if

'sectarianism' prevails in Iraq, without specifying which Iraqis and what time-period are being

referred to, is to ask a non-question."[323] In the context of understanding the violence in post-2003

Iraq, Sabah Alnasseri makes a powerful argument for the role of the occupation as the root cause

of the violence rather than Iraq's sectarian nature. He argues, "the notion of the Iraq conflict as a

sectarian conflict, which is propagated by the occupier, suggests that the spiral of violence is due

not to the occupation, but is a manifestation of the internal logic of Iraqi society."[324]

    Drawing on the work of Haddad[325] and Khoury,[326] I argue that sectarian *relations* is a

more fruitful concept because it allows for historical context and factors such as foreign

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[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid., 231. Emphasis added.
[318] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 2008.
[319] Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2009.
[320] Davis, "Introduction: The Question of Sectarian Identities in Iraq," 2010.
[321] Khoury, "The Security State and the Practice and Rhetoric of Sectarianism in Iraq," 2010.
[322] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity,* 2011.
[323] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq,* 6.
[324] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 77.
[325] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq,* 2011.
[326] Khoury, "The security state and the practice and rhetoric of sectarianism in Iraq," 2010.

intervention, economic competition or state-building that may either facilitate a strict sectarian

identity and exacerbate strife and tension or a loose sectarian affiliation and induce cooperation

and tolerance. However, I argue it is important to add the processes by which sectarian, ethnic,

and racial identities are politicized by both elites and the state in order to understand

contemporary Iraqi politics. That is, fueling sectarian animosity and strife has served a purpose;

Alnasseri draws our attention to the way in which the discourse of "sectarianism" and "civil war"

further legitimizes "the occupation and the presence of an ever-increasing number of troops and

forces, on which the position of power of the governing cliques and the ruling classes relies."[327]

This is a particularly useful understanding of the violence in post-2003 Iraq. As the next section

of this chapter demonstrates, the external factor of an invading foreign power, whether 1920s

Britain or the US in 2003, imposing their system of governance to either make or re-make the

Iraqi state through *violence* is a vital factor in understanding the aftermath of such policies rather

than solely looking to endogenous cultural explanations.

In short, the lens of sectarianism is a simple one that provides a limited understanding of

Iraqi society and politics. It is also essentialist and reductionist; there are a variety of factors that

must be analyzed together to understand Iraqi society. For example, there are more important

signifiers or identities than "sect" when analyzing the diversity of interests across segments of

Iraqi society such as class. Hanna Batatu writes that people living in the tribal countryside were a

world apart from those who lived in urban spaces; "the links between them were primarily

economic."[328] Just as important, were the social and psychological differences between the urban

and tribal Arabs.[329] The role of foreign intervention is also an important factor in the analysis of

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[327] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 77.
[328] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq,* 13.
[329] Ibid.

the domestic politics of any state, especially in the Global South. In the case of Iraq, its effects

cannot be overemphasized due to its history of rule by the Ottomans and later, the British. Both

empires implemented policies and influenced sectarian relations differently to serve their own

interests. Sami Zubaida writes, "the 'orientalist' picture of 'Islamic' societies as communalistic,

religious and impervious to modern ideologies has actually been realized as a modern

phenomenon under totalitarian regimes in Iraq and elsewhere."[330] Similarly, Farouk-Sluglett and

Sluglett argue, "patriarchal values and ties of family, clan, locality, tribe and sect continue to be

reproduced since the existence of a highly dictatorial and repressive regime for more than two

decades has operated against their disintegration."[331]

     The literature on sectarianism in Iraq can be placed into three categories. First, there is

the scholarship, which portrays modern Iraq as an "artificial" political entity; accordingly, the

"artificiality" of Iraq's origins explains contemporary sectarianism in the country.[332] Second,

there is a body of work that is concerned with sectarianism as an explanatory tool for Iraqi

society and politics during the Ba'ath period specifically.[333] Finally, there are scholars who

situate the sectarian violence characterizing contemporary Iraqi politics as a *modern*

phenomenon in Iraq.[334] I limit this critique of sectarianism to the first category, as it is the most

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[330] Zubaida, "Community, Class and Minorities in Iraqi politics," 209. Emphasis added.
[331] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, "The Historiography of Modern Iraq," 1412.
[332] See Lukitz. *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1995; Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-89*, 1991; Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities," 2003; Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq: The Making of State and Nation Since 1920,* 2014.
[333] This includes Iraqi exiles. See such as al-Azri, *Mushkilat al-Hukum fi al-'Iraq: Tahlil li al-'Awamil al-Ta'ifiyyah wa al-'Unsuriyyah fi Ta'atil al-Hukum al-Dimuqrati fi al-Iraq wa al-Hulul al-Dharuiyyah li al-Taghallub 'Alayaha* (*The Problem of Rule in Iraq: An Analysis of the Role of Sectarian and Racist Factors in Obstructing Democratic Governance in Iraq and the Solutions Necessary to Overcome Them*), 1991; Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World,* 1993; Al-Nahi, *Khiyanat al-Nasr* (*The Betrayal of Victory*)*,* 2001; Al-Zaydi, *Al-Bina' al-Ma'nawi lil Quwat al-Musalahha al-'Iraqiya* (*The Structural Significant of the Iraqi Armed Forces*), 1990; Al-Zaydi, *Azmat al-Qiyada fi al-Iraq* (*The Crisis of Leadership in* Iraq), 1993.
[334] See Sami Ramadani, "The Sectarian Myth of Iraq," 2007; Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 2008; Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2009; Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq,* 2009; Ismael, "The Republic of Iraq," 185-240; Yousif, "The Political Economy of Sectarianism in Iraq," 2010; Khoury, "The Security State and the Practice and

prevalent. As will be shown, scholars in the last category have produced the most productive and

astute analyses of *sectarian relations* and specifically, of the violence in post-2003 Iraq. It is

very important to emphasize the idea that while the Ba'ath regime, or foreign powers such as the

Ottomans, the British and the Anglo-American coalition have exploited sectarian relations and

sectarian identities to suit their interests, they did not *create* them. Haddad writes, "State policy

and officially sanctioned discrimination undoubtedly exacerbate sectarian tensions; however,

often the state can only amplify extant fissures and tendencies and is unlikely to be able to create

new ones overnight."[335] While I agree with this contention, I argue that the state *does* politicize

identities through various policies and rhetoric in order to meet its goals. Peter Sluglett's position

in this regard is more useful; he writes that while "external forces or agencies cannot *create*

sectarianism *ex nihilo* within a particular region or state…such forces can use and mould existing

circumstances for their own immediate or long-term ends."[336] Moreover, a distinction needs to

be made between elites competing with each other for political, economic and social control and

using "sect" as a framing mechanism for said competition and the people themselves identifying

with "sect." As Abbas Kadhim reminds us, "historically, Shi'a and Sunni members of the Iraqi

elite fought over power, privileges, and political control, while their constituents intermarried,

entered in business partnerships and engaged each other in various social activities."[337]

The relations between different groups in Iraq have been a mixture of conflict or

cooperation, depending on the political and economic circumstances of the period. For instance,

"Iraqis of all ethno-confessional backgrounds set their sectarian differences aside and fought a

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Rhetoric of Sectarianism in Iraq," 2010; Davis, "Introduction: The Question of Sectarian Identities in Iraq," 2010;
Sluglett, "The British, the Sunnis and the Shi'is: Social Hierarchies of identity under the British Mandate," 2010;
Visser, "The Territorial Aspect of Sectarianism in Iraq," 2010.
[335] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq,* 7.
[336] Sluglett, "The British, the Sunnis and the Shi'is: Social Hierarchies of Identity under the British Mandate," 258.
[337] Kadhim, "Efforts at Cross-Ethnic Cooperation: The 1920 Revolution and Sectarian Identities in Iraq," 279.

common cause during the June to October 1920 Revolution."[338] This tells us that "sect" is not the

only identity people have and that its salience increases or decreases depending on the political,

economic, and social context. It also tells us that aside from identity, other factors, such as

economic hardship, foreign occupation, perceived social or political marginalization influence

people's behaviour. To reduce Iraqi society and politics to one factor – "sectarianism" – is very

problematic because it stunts our understanding of these events. More importantly, it is based on

a static or all-encompassing understanding of identity. As Fanar Haddad argues, "'Shi'a' and

'Sunni' are not monolithic groups; rather they are themselves intersected by various social,

economic and political categories that in themselves may unite 'Sunnis' and 'Shi'as' on the basis

of, for example, class or political ideology."[339] This critical approach offers a powerful

explanatory tool for understanding sectarian relations in post-2003 Iraq.

Likewise, in his lecture on "sectarianism and the current situation in Iraq," Alnasseri,

challenges the conventional presentation of post-2003 Iraq as a sectarian or civil war. He argues,

"We are talking about categories like Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd etc. as if they are political categories.

Being a Shi'a means nothing about your political position."[340] In other words, religious and/or

ethnic identity *in itself* does not offer a useful explanatory tool to understand a person's political

orientation. However, these identities can be politicized in someone's interest for some purpose.

For Alnasseri, the political crisis in post-2003 Iraq can be understood as a correlation of interests

between the Bush administration and the ruling classes of Iraq, both of which have their own

agendas.[341]

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[338] Ibid., 292.
[339] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 8.
[340] Alnasseri, "Sectarianism and What's Going on in Iraq."
[341] Ibid.

It is important to highlight the economic and political interests of the elite exiled opposition and their role in post-2003 Iraq. While a sole emphasis on class is insufficient, it should not be overlooked. Sluglett contends that "there is no clear evidence from Iraqi history to suggest that Iraqi Sunnis have hated Iraqi Shi'as (or vice versa) 'from time immemorial.'"[342] Furthermore, Sluglett echoes Alnasseri's emphasis on class by attributing the Sunnis' fear of the potential political mobilization of the Shi'a, the majority of which were poor. He writes, "…but such fears seemed to have been less sectarian-based than class-based: that is, the elite were afraid of 'communism,' rather than 'Shi'ism' as such."[343]

No state represents one coherent entity, despite the claims of nationalism. This means that within the state, various groups negotiate their position both within the state and in relation to other groups. These groups may be ethnic, religious, or based on a matrix of political, economic, social or cultural interests. They also compete over resources, or control of ideas and policy. However, the conventional literature on Iraq almost always reduces Iraqis to their "ethnic" identities; accordingly, there are "three major ethnic power blocs" that make up Iraqi society.[344] This is the manifestation of the most prevalent category of literature on sectarianism rooted in the artificiality thesis. In this literature, Reidar Visser argues, there are Shi'a Arabs, who despite being the majority, are portrayed as "historically oppressed and who suffered badly during the failed uprising in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War."[345] Sunni Arabs, who are a numerical minority, are depicted as having "always benefited from being the majority sect in Islamic empires and who in modern times, have 'ruled ruthlessly' in order to suppress everyone

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[342] Sluglett, "The British, the Sunnis and the Shi'is: Social Hierarchies of Identity under the British Mandate," 258.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Visser, "Ethnicity, Federalism and the Idea of Sectarian Citizenship in Iraq: A Critique," 809.
[345] Ibid.

else."[346] Finally, there are Kurds, "who are seen as having been 'fiercely independent' since time immemorial and locked in a perpetual nationalist struggle against outside domination."[347] Usually, there is a brief mention, almost as an afterthought, of minorities that are seen as "isolated" or "fragmented" such as the Assyrians (almost always labelled as *Christians*), Turkomans, Shabak, Yazidis and others.

It is true that Iraq is made up of Shi'a and Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak, Turkomans, Mandaeans and others. However, the sectarian analysis describes their identities in Iraq as if they were not interacting with each other or with the state. Furthermore, this uncritical lens also overlooks these groups' attachment to the entity of *Iraq* –that is, Iraqi state nationalism, which despite its many problems, has been in the making since 1932. For Visser, the endurance of Iraq as a territorial concept, the persistent view of sectarianism as exogenous to, and imposed on Iraq, and the survival of the idea of national unity are all indicators that challenge the essentialist sectarian lens.[348] Indeed, Hala Fattah highlights two autobiographical works, one by an important Baghdad-based Shi'a merchant Abdullah al-Sarraf and Communist theoretician Aziz al-Hajj, a Fayli Kurd and "countless other Iraqis who have debated and inevitably discarded the notion of the 'artificial' nation."[349]

It is also important to note the racialized aspect of this sectarian discussion within the scholarship and overall depiction of Iraq after 2003. Haddad contends that there is a tendency to see nationalism and the nation-state as being inherently problematic in the post-colonial world.[350] Specifically, he argues,

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[346] Ibid., 810.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Visser, "Ethnicity, Federalism and the Idea of Sectarian Citizenship in Iraq: A Critique," 2007.
[349] Fattah, "The Question of the 'Artificiality' of Iraq as a Nation State," 57.
[350] Haddad, *Sectarianism in* Iraq, 2011.

> the impression one is often left with is that western states have imagined their communities, invented their traditions and undergone their political or economic transformations thereby creating nation-states that are accepted as a legitimate reality. Conversely, post-colonial states are depicted as struggling with western imports such as nationalism and artificial nation-states.[351]

I agree that the nation-state and nationalism are European imports and this study strives to challenge and deconstruct these notions by shaking their claim to universality; in a sense, to place them back into their particular context. However, Haddad's claim that "the validity of the nation-state is, by and large, as accepted and as venerated in post-colonial states as in the western world"[352] is equally important. Regardless of a concept's origins, construction, or even imposition, we cannot deny its material effects, nor can we go back in time before such concepts – in this case the nation-state – were imposed. Iraqis recognize the creation of the state as a result of European colonialism; yet, "many Iraqis will regard 'Iraq' as an entity that transcends the nation-state and stretches back to antiquity."[353] This idea that Iraq dates back to antiquity is itself constructed through many policies of nation-building, especially during the Saddam Hussein era, which were in reality, an appropriation of Assyrian culture and heritage.[354] However, the fact that most Iraqis hold it to be true is itself an indication of the reality of the nation-state as a universal national and political unit.[355] Needless to say, I acknowledge the brutality of nation-building projects in Iraq, both before and after 2003. The point, however, is to problematize the assumption that nationalism does not exist in Iraq, because it is an imported European/Western "good."

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[351] Ibid., 33.

[352] Ibid.

[353] Ibid.

[354] I have written about this process of appropriation and "Arabization" of Mesopotamian heritage elsewhere. See Georgis, "Nation and Identity Construction in Modern Iraq: (Re)inserting the Assyrians," in *Unsettling Colonial Modernity: Islamicate Contexts in Focus,* edited by Saffari et al., 2017.

[355] Chapter 4 discusses in more detail Iraqi articulations of Iraqi-ness, which point to the existence of an Iraqi nationalism.

The idea that the diversity of Iraq has hindered its national unity or somehow resulted in the national disintegration we arguably see today is not new. In their review of much of the recent writing on modern Iraq, Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett argue, "by any objective standard, what is one of the most appalling dictatorships in the Third World has been presented, either directly or by implication, as a kind of necessary evil that a society as 'heterogeneous' as Iraq somehow 'requires' the anvil on which the nation-state has to be hammered out."[356] This idea is also echoed by the assertion that "Iraq can only be governed by a strong man."[357]

The population of Iraq, as discussed earlier, is comprised of various ethnic and religious groups; however, these communities and sects do not constitute homogenous or monolithic single entities.[358] Moreover, the significance of these sectarian or tribal affiliations varied in different historical periods depending on the economic, political and social contexts of the time. An analysis of Iraqi society, in sum, needs to be accompanied by an analysis of society under dictatorship such as Saddam Hussein whose regime did not *represent* the people of Iraq. Moreover, the role played by foreign powers in aiding his regime must also be considered. Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett remind us that "the West's crime (in this case abetted by the former Soviet Union and its allies) has been to tolerate, and to build up, regimes like those of Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Husayn, and many others, for so long…It is a tragic irony that the West and others have made him so invincible."[359] This has only served to harm the Iraqi people on the ground who have not only had to endure the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein but also the international efforts to "discipline" him through the UN sanction regime (1990-2003).

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[356] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, "The Historiography of Modern Iraq," 1412.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid., 1413.
[359] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since* 1958, XIV.

The literature on sectarianism can also be related to the idea of Arab exceptionalism because it too falls into the fallacy of essentialism. That is, both Western and Arab scholars embedded within this Orientalist tradition, have examined and written about the "Arab world" as a homogenous unit of analysis rather than studying each distinct Arab society in its own context.[360] Moreover, as Jacques Kabbanji argues, the work of most of these scholars greatly relies on a particular reading of Weber's understanding of Islam.[361] He writes, "therefore, the perception of Arab 'Muslim' societies is based on a specific approach: it is the one that takes religion itself, i.e. Islam in this case, as the key concept in the analysis of these societies."[362] While the role of religion is important in these societies, this "same approach is not applied to other non-Muslim societies because they are not considered under their religious 'identity.'"[363] Other societies are not reduced to a single factor of religion when they are studied nor are the conflicts amongst different groups analyzed through the narrow lens of "sectarianism." In fact,

> Weber, who is inspiring to many scholars in their approach to society and religion, seems quite reticent about qualifying the relationship between religion and other structural components of society as one-dimensional and determinate…The question therefore is why this rule is carefully applied only when studying societies other than the 'Muslim' ones?[364]

This important question demonstrates the racialization of Muslim societies in the conventional literature on the sectarianism in Iraq. The works of Orientalist scholars on Arabs, Islam, and Arab exceptionalism have been widely debated and challenged by critical scholars.[365] It is

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[360] Kabbanji, "The 'Internationalization' of Social Sciences as an 'Obstacle' to Understanding the Ongoing Arab Revolts," 2014.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid., 119.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Kabbanji, "The 'Internationalization' of Social Sciences as an 'Obstacle' to Understanding the Ongoing Arab Revolts," 119.
[365] See Bayat, "Arab Revolutions and the Study of Middle Eastern Societies," 2011; Baker, "Degrading Democracy: Iraq, Empire, and Struggles for Freedom in the Arab Islamic World," 2007; Zubaida, "The 'Arab Spring' in the Historical Perspectives of Middle East Politics," 2012.

beyond the scope of this work to go through them all extensively. However, for the purposes of this analysis, I am suggesting a link between these prevalent ideologies among some of the Western scholars, policymakers, intelligence and military personnel, and mass media about Arabs, Muslims, or the entire region in general, and the violent foreign policies of imperial and foreign powers towards the region.

This is evident through a number of social science studies on democracies such as the *Arab Human Development Reports* sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (2002-05) and *Freedom House* surveys citing the democracy gap in the Middle East.[366] It is more relevant for this analysis to highlight some important critiques of the idea of Arab exceptionalism because this idea can also be linked to colonial modernity and the Western mission to civilize the Other by spreading development and democracy as Western values, or "goods" across the globe. In his critique of Ernest Gellner's essentialization of Islam and Middle East societies, Zubaida writes, "this framework of analysis constitutes the familiar philosophy of history of the 'uniqueness of the West' stemming from Max Weber among others, in which the West's historical achievements of capitalism, industrialization, modernity, democracy and so on constitute a reference point for an analysis of world history."[367] For Zubaida, the point is to "challenge 'Islam' as a coherent sociological or political entity."[368] Likewise, this approach should be extended to the category of "Arab;" we cannot take "Arabs" out of their national contexts in which they have lived in the postcolonial Middle East and North Africa. As a

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[366] See Karatnycky, "The 2001 Freedom House Survey: Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," 2002. This report states, "since the early 1970s, when the 'third wave' of democratization began, the Islamic world – and its Arab core in particular – has seen little significant improvement in political openness, respect for human rights, or transparency." Moreover, the report cites the "democracy gap" between Islamic countries and the rest of the world as "dramatic." Specifically, this "'democracy gap' persists in every region where there are Islamic countries." The report points to a "number of factors" such as development, culture, interpretation of Islam etc. as explanations for this gap but fails to include foreign intervention as a factor in the region's seeming inability to democratize.
[367] Zubaida, "Is there a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's sociology of Islam," 153.
[368] Ibid.

distinguished historian of Arab societies, Eugene Rogan, argues, "no meaningful Arab-wide nationalist movement was possible so long as the Arab world was divided between Britain and France."[369] More importantly, "by the time the Arab states began to secure their independence from colonial rule in the 1940s and 1950s, the divisions between Arab states had become permanent."[370] Critical postcolonial scholarship enables us to study and understand the current conditions of post-independent states after the impacts of colonialism; we cannot return to the pre-colonial socio-political conditions. Moreover, identities do not possess explanatory power alone; identities need to be considered along with political and economic factors to yield a more comprehensive understanding of events.

2.3 Top-Down Nation-building from the "Outside"

Like many other states in the Global South, Iraq was created by colonial powers. The modern state of Iraq was constructed out of three former Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra. However, Iraqis have rarely been in a position to exercise the right of determining their own political future. From its inception, the Iraqi state was built under British tutelage where they imposed their model of institutions, government, bureaucracy, and constitution. However, the British hardly interacted with Iraqi society; "in lieu of detailed investigations and engagement with actual conditions and practices, [the British] understood Iraq through the distorted shorthand supplied by the dominant cultural stereotypes of the day."[371] The British imported an elected parliamentary system; however, "the system was in reality a façade for a puppet administration that had little room for manoeuvring outside British interests."[372]

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[369] Rogan, *The Arabs: A History,* 7.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, X.
[372] Ismael, "Whither Iraq? Beyond Saddam, Sanctions and Occupation," 611.

Following the British withdrawal from Iraq, the politicization of sectarian identities, elitism, and violence as a means to gain political power were firmly entrenched in the state apparatus. Similarly, after the invasion of 2003, the United States made no effort to substantially engage with Iraqis, their history, or their political or cultural reality; rather, the United States acted on preconceptions of who Iraqis were, [373] and focused on its own geostrategic and economic interests. In this way, both the British and the United States thought they were "building Iraq" from scratch with the underlying idea that Iraqis were inherently incapable of forging their own state and politics.

Evidently, the Anglo-American occupation after the 2003 invasion and subsequent regime change was not the first experience of foreign intervention for Iraqis. Toby Dodge writes, "Iraq, by highlighting the tortured birth of the postcolonial state in international relations, played a ground breaking role in world politics."[374] Dodge makes this assertion within the context of the "moral and ideological wreckage of empire"[375] at the end of the First World War wherein "the universalizing ideology of Wilson, combined with America's propagation of unrestricted markets, meant that European powers found it impossible to justify the annexation of territory they had acquired by the end of the War."[376] For Dodge, because Iraq was the first mandated state to gain its independence and enter the League of Nations as a "full, self-determining" member, this meant that "it had escaped both the clutches of the Ottoman and total absorption within the British imperial system."[377] However, while the Mandate system was not direct

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[373] This is evident through American perceptions that Iraq is made up of sectarian identities (Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd), which are the most important characteristics to understanding Iraq. Everyday Iraqi professionals (doctors, engineers, government bureaucrats, teachers etc.) were suspected of being Ba'athists and dismissed without inclusion into the reconstruction of Iraq. I discuss this in chapter four with regards to the occupation policy of de-Ba'athification.

[374] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, XIII.

[375] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, XIII.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Ibid., XIV.

colonial rule, soon into the Mandate period, British officials "made clear their intention of curbing Iraqi sovereignty and of exerting direct influence over the country's governance."[378] Decades later and at the onset of a new era in international relations, Iraq would again come to play a similar role in the international system. Put differently, "both in 1920 and once again in 2003, this quest for international order has had a profound impact on the domestic politics of Iraq."[379] In *Inventing Iraq: The failure of Nation Building and a History Denied,* Dodge draws linkages between British "nation-building" during the Mandate period and the Anglo-American invasion and subsequent occupation in 2003. While Dodge contends that Britain unintentionally undermined the nascent Iraqi state, I posit that the "intentionality" of the British is irrelevant. An analysis of foreign intervention, whether British or American, is limited without a consideration of these foreign powers' economic and geostrategic interests.

British national interest can be seen through the their policies of building alliances with elites to ensure British-friendly policies at the expense of Iraqis.[380] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett maintain that the British occupation and Mandatory administration had "wide-ranging, cataclysmic effects, which derived originally from the necessity of creating a social base for a regime which had no local roots and which had been imported *en bloc* from outside."[381] Rather than building a "self-determining" Iraq, the ruling elites were selected based on their willingness to meet British interests; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett write, "individuals were picked out by the

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[378] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 19.
[379] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* XII.
[380] Everyday Iraqis resented the British occupation. There were mass protests against the Mandate in Iraq. The 1920 *Thawra* (Revolution) was cross-ethnic/religious in nature and is considered to be the founding act of the nation. See Kadhim, "Efforts at Cross-Ethnic Cooperation: The 1920 Revolution and sectarian identities in Iraq, 2010; Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: the Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2008; Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation,* 2009; Al-Basir, *Tarikh al-Qadiyya al-*Iraqiya (*The History of the Iraqi Issue)*, 1990; Nazmi, *al-Judhur al-Siyasiya wa al-Fikriya wa al-Ijtima'iya li-l-Haraka al-Qawmiya al-Arabiya (al-Istiqlaliya) fi al-'Iraq* (*The Political and Ideological and Social Roots of the Arab Nationalist Movement in Iraq*), 1984.
[381] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, "Some Reflections on the Sunni/Shi'i Question in Iraq," 82.

British intelligence services to act as tribal sheikhs, and were officially invested with juridical, and later financial, authority over their tribes."[382] While these individuals were tribal sheikhs, Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett explain that the authority of these positions had "waned considerably by the time of World War I. Many of them, as a contemporary observer in Hilla put it, 'were small men of no account until we made them powerful and rich.'"[383] In short, without a popular base, the government's only means to maintain power was to partner with cooperative tribal sheikhs, whose appointment by the government meant that their armed militias now also had government backing.[384]

The British also ensured their interests through sectarian-driven policies of playing different ethnic groups against each other. For example, the British encouraged the formation of a Shi'a party, the *Hizb al-Nahda*, whose goal it was to fight for "Shi'a rights."[385] The *Hizb al-Nahda* was encouraged to continue opposing military conscription, which allowed British officials to "argue that Shi'i tribes would never accept conscription, and that there would be tribal revolt which would defeat the Iraqi army and topple the government and the regime."[386] However, for Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, the real reason for encouraging an opposition to conscription was its fear of allowing the development of a large Iraqi army, which could "possibly threaten the *status quo* and Britain's special position."[387]

Another example of sectarian-driven policies by the British is the first Iraqi Nationality Law of 1924, which was drafted by British officials and approved by Iraqi statesmen.[388] Zainab Saleh argues that this Law "undermined the notion of equal citizenship when it categorized Iraqi

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[382] Ibid., 83.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, "Some Reflections on the Sunni/Shi'i Question in Iraq," 83.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," 2013.

citizens on the basis of the citizenship they had held under Ottoman rule, and whether they were at the time Ottoman or Persian citizens."[389] Positing the Law as an instrument of institutionalizing difference in Iraq, Saleh points to the contradictions in the Law as it defined who was "Iraqi" and "Arab." For example, it considered "King Faysal, who hailed from Mecca, to be an Iraqi citizen, while defining inhabitants who held the Persian nationality as second-class citizens whose loyalty was *suspect* and whose access to state resources was unequal."[390] In addition to differentiating between who was a "citizen" and who was not, this Law was a tool of "internal differentiation" within the category of citizen. For Saleh, "the Iraqi nation-state was built on exclusion, discrimination, and the hardening of ethnic and sectarian identities, through the drafting and implementation of various laws."[391]This colonial legacy would continue in Iraq post-independence; Saleh argues that under the Ba'ath regime, an *authentic* Iraqi was someone whose "ancestors held Ottoman nationality" while an *inauthentic* Iraqi was someone whose "ancestors held the Persian nationality."[392] She links the legacies of this Law to the deportation of "*taba'iyya iraniyya*" – Iraqis of "Iranian" origin during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).[393] I discuss this in greater detail below under the Ba'ath state-building model.

By 1927, the idea of creating a legitimate, stable state that could rule its population was forgotten; "Britain's primary policy goal from 1927 onward was to unburden itself of its international responsibilities towards Iraq as quickly as possible."[394] Dodge writes, "reports to the League Mandate Committee were intentionally falsified. Those in Iraq complaining about the sham of central government rule were silenced or ignored."[395] Hence, regardless of their

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[389] Ibid., 49.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Ibid., 50.
[392] Ibid., 51.
[393] Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," 51.
[394] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 9.
[395] Ibid., 10.

intentions, Britain constructed a "'quasi-state,' one which bore the appearance of a *de jure* national polity but whose institutions were in fact a façade built in order to allow Britain to disengage."[396]Arab historian Albert Hourani points out, "For Britain and France, control over the Arab countries was important not only because of their interests in the region itself, but because it strengthened their position in the world."[397] This implies that we need to emphasize the role of the international system on Iraqi domestic politics, but we must also analyze the effect of the international system on British (or US) policy towards Iraq.

Dodge reminds us that "the period during which modern Iraq was created, 1914-1932, is situated in the interregnum between two epochs – that of free-trade imperialism dominated by the British and U.S. – promoted international liberalism."[398] The new organizing principle for the international system, he argues, was based on the universal unit of the sovereign state, fostering comparatively open world markets and politically independent governments.[399] Drawing on critical postcolonial thought, I argue that this system was not universal but particular; open markets and politically independent governments were not natural by-products of the state system. These are *constructed* economic and political processes that require perpetual performance in order to exist. Moreover, they do not manifest themselves in the same way across states in the international system. This new system, however, did mean that the British could not simply annex the parts of the Ottoman Empire that would later be called Iraq after the War as previously mentioned. Wilson's idea of self-determination in the developing world became predominant by the mid-1930s. A change in organizing principle for the international system is important but does not naturally result in a change on the ground or in the foreign policy of

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[396] Ibid.
[397] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 320.
[398] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 2.
[399] Ibid., 4.

imperial powers, or bring changes that benefit people on the ground. For the most part, Iraqis as a whole, were seen as backward, childish, and incapable of determining their political futures or govern themselves.[400] As occupation or direct control of the territory became an impossibility, the British acquiesced to rule through the Mandate system.

The Mandate system was in effect, a top-down nation-building process imposed on Iraq by a foreign imperial power. Deciding the political future and governing structure of millions of other people is both arrogant and problematic. However, the British not only modelled Iraq in their image by installing a monarchy, but they chose Hashemite Amir Faisal to be king. He was not from "Iraq" but "he was believed to be amenable to British advice."[401] Not straying too far from Ottoman practice, the British found the Sunni Arabs (and the Kurds, although to a lesser extent) generally more amenable partners than the Shi'a Arabs. Sluglett attributes this in part, to the fact that Sunni Arabs comprised "the main cadres both for the civil administration of Mesopotamia and for the officer corps of the Iraqi army"[402] and in turn, because few Shi'a were either ready to play these roles (also due to legacy of Ottoman rule) or "perhaps more importantly, were *deemed incompetent to be able to serve in them.*"[403] However, Sluglett importantly argues that "although it is true that a small group of Sunnis ran the machinery of state and government under and for the British, they could not have done so without the partnership and/or acquiescence of the great landowners of southern Iraq, almost all of whom were Shi'is."[404] This challenges the simple "sectarian" narrative of Sunni Arabs having always ruled over the rest of Iraq. Moreover, we can see that the British, like the Ottomans before them

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[400] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* II.
[401] Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 48.
[402] Sluglett, "The British, the Sunnis and the Shi'is: Social Hierarchies of Identity Under the British Mandate," 265.
[403] Sluglett, "The British, the Sunnis and the Shi'is: Social Hierarchies of Identity Under the British Mandate," 265.
[404] Ibid., 258.

and other governments to come, helped to entrench the politicization of sectarian identities in order to carry out their geostrategic and economic goals.

This is not by any means an exhaustive analysis of the Mandate period in Iraq. It only very briefly touches upon its legacy in order to historicize and contextualize contemporary Iraq, especially following the Anglo-American invasion and occupation in 2003. These two periods of foreign nation-building have much in common. Both involved the imposition of sectarian policies from a foreign, imperial, hegemonic power, although to different extents. Both of these powers greatly misunderstood Iraqi society and politics, and more importantly, operated under Orientalist misconceptions of Iraqi society. The British understood Iraqi society through an Orientalist and racist lens during the Mandate period.

Likewise, the US has relied on predominant cultural stereotypes of the "Arab" as being "backward," "violent," "emotional," and incapable of democratic government. Moreover, they have presumed all Iraqi society to be ethnically Arab or Kurd, and where the diversity of Iraq is acknowledged, it is based on caricatures and simplistic understandings of the different communities without taking into account their histories and positions to the other communities and the state. The Americans trusted Iraqi exiles to act as their liaisons and installed them as the new elite of the regime in post-2003 Iraq. These new elites, however, were not among the most informed people of Iraq. As Zaid Al-Ali writes, "much changed during the thirty-five years that the Ba'ath party ruled the country: laws, regulations, working practices. In 2003, many returnees noted with disappointment that even cultural values had changed."[405] Not only were these exiles out of touch with contemporary Iraqi society and politics, but they were given the opportunity to

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[405] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future*, 52.

shape the country's future and the lives of everyday Iraqis, without having lived in Iraq for a

significant amount of time.

I will discuss the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq in more detail in the

following chapters. However, it is important to highlight the similarities and problems of these

two colonial nation-building projects that have impacted Iraqi society and politics. We cannot

understand why Iraq has not transitioned to a stable democracy without historically

contextualizing these periods of colonial nation-building. Relatedly, these periods have been

followed by periods of intense violence characterized by a desire to eliminate those perceived as

the Other.[406]

2.4 State-Building under Saddam Hussein (1979-2003): Legacies for Post-2003 Iraq

Iraq, both the ancient land it sits on and in the modern context, is an incredibly diverse

political entity. As with any other diverse state, its history involves the compromises,

negotiations, and violence amongst its peoples or against Other peoples. Moreover, conquest,

invasion, and colonization from foreign powers have resulted in, myriad oppressions, some more

emphasized than others. Many scholars have examined the role of violence in the nation or state

building process.[407] Similar to other nation-building projects, Iraq's nation-building model has

attempted to construct a homogenous national identity through and resulting in, the exclusion of

certain segments of society. One such mechanism was implementing policies intended to re-

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[406] The massacre of Simele occurred in the period directly following the Mandate. In 2003, there is mass sectarian violence following de-Ba'athification and occupation.

[407] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 1991; Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe,* 1996; Mitchell, *Native Vs. Settler: Ethnic Confict in Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, and South Africa,* 2000; Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, 2005; Quijano, "The Challenge of the 'Indigenous Movement' in Latin America," 2005; Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History,* 2008; Razack, Thobani, Smith, *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century*, 2010.

write the history of Mesopotamia to construct an exclusively Arab national identity – Arab

defined in a specific way the government required. This means the category of "Arab" becomes

more homogenous, reified and narrow. This also means that those Arabs who did not fit into this

particular definition of "Arab" were also deemed as undesirable or not to belong as will be

shown in the case of Iraqis of "Iranian origin" during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) later in this

section. This historical revisionism also resulted in the marginalization of various religious,

linguistic, cultural and ethnic minorities.

Iraq gained independence as a monarchy in 1932 from the British Mandate. It

experienced its first military coup in October 1936 under Bakr Sidqi. Majid Khadduri attributes

the coup to a collusion between two very different opposition movements: the first, *Ahali*

(Peoples') group" who advocated for "socialism and democracy"; the second, mainly army

officers who promoted "nationalism" via "military dictatorship."[408] For Charles Tripp, the coup

d'état of April 1941 led by Rashid Ali was "significantly different" from previous ones because

it was "no longer simply aimed at replacing one prime minister with another;" but rather, it was

directed against the monarch.[409] Quashed by the Iraqi government and British troops, the ruling

elite in Iraq "embarked on a comprehensive cleansing of the nationalist officer corps as well as

the clubs and organizations that were populated by nationalist professors and intellectuals."[410]

The monarchy was finally overthrown in 1958 by a leftist nationalist military coup led by Abd al

Karim Qasim and Abd al Salam Muhammad Arif. The Qasim era came to a "violent end in

February 1963 in a military coup orchestrated by members of the Ba'ath Party."[411] The Ba'ath

began a systematic elimination of their rivals, including a particularly brutal campaign against

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[408] Khadduri, "The Coup D'état of 1936: A Study in Iraqi Politics," 270.
[409] Tripp, *Iraq: A History,* 103.
[410] Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*, 166.
[411] Ibid., 183.

the Iraqi Community Party (ICP).[412] The Ba'ath Party, founded in Syria in 1944 by Michel

Aflaq, Salah al-Din Bitar and Zaki al-Arsuzi, first developed as a "national liberation movement

in opposition to the French and subsequently in response to what its founders regarded as the

political and ideological inadequacies of the older generation of Syrian nationalists."[413] In short,

it was underpinned by a pan-Arab ideology as a response to the postcolonial condition of Middle

Eastern states. However, for Farouk Sluglett and Sluglett, the Ba'athist version of socialism was

"anti-Marxist, in the sense that it [stressed] the primacy of national-ethnic identity and [rejected]

the notion of antagonistic social classes."[414]

I focus on the Ba'ath period (1968-2003) in this chapter, specifically the period under the

dictatorship of Saddam Hussein (1979-2003), because it has been the most exclusive and

traumatic period of Iraqi state-building. Eric Davis contends that the Ba'athist regime politicized

historical memory far more than any prior regime, using its access to massive oil revenues during

the 1970s and early 1980s to engage in the rewriting of history on a scale never seen before in

Iraq or anywhere else in the Arab world.[415] We can add to this the politicization and

securitization of *others'* identities residing on the margins or periphery of Iraqi society. For

example, during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), the Shi'a communities' religious sect was

politicized as they were targeted due to the regime's accusations of collusion with Iran. The

South dataset in the Ba'ath Party Collection includes countless orders of capture of "battle-age"

men and mass "deportation" to Iran of the Shi'a Arabs and Kurds, despite the fact they were not

Iranian.[416] The Iraqi government came to view this community as a threat, especially with the

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[412] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958,* 86.
[413] Ibid., 87.
[414] Ibid., 89.
[415] Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, 3.
[416] See North Iraq DataSet, *Hizb al-Ba'th al- 'Arabi al-Ishtiraki in Iraq* (Ba'th Party) Records 1968-2003, Hoover Institution Archives; South Iraq DataSet, *Hizb al-Ba'th al- 'Arabi al-Ishtiraki in Iraq* (Ba'th Party) Records 1968-2003, Hoover Institution Archives.

"rise of Shi'a ulema-led religious opposition in the 1970s and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran."[417] In the words of Majd al-Kammari from Baghdad, on the second of May in 1980, "security forces walked into our house with machine guns and asked us to gather whatever belongings we had to take with us because they were going to leave us on the border with Iran; the reason for this was because we were *Iranians*."[418] Al-Kammari's brother would be taken that day, which they understood afterwards, was due to Saddam Hussein's policy of "taking males between the age of 15 up to 35 so they would not go and join the army in Iran to fight against the Iraqis."[419] He is referring to the Iraqi state's order of "broad-scale detention of young men between eighteen and twenty-eight" many of whom were killed and whose bodies remain in mass graves.[420]

When asked why they were viewed as "Iranian," al-Kammari responded, "because all the Iraqis going back to when Iraq was formed either had an Iraqi nationality with Iranian origin or Ottoman origin" even though his mother's side settled in Iraq 500 years ago and his father's side had settled over 120 years ago.[421] Saleh demonstrates the way in which the legislation authorizing the *taba'iyya's* denaturalization through "Resolution 666 of 1980" was an adaptation of the first Iraqi Nationality Law of 1924 drafted and adopted under the British mandate wherein Iraqi citizens were differentiated on the basis of "Persian or Ottoman nationality."[422] An unnamed man, a Fayli Kurd, tells a similar story but adds, "we were all Iraqis but through distortions of Saddam's documentation were classified as *Iranian* in origin and that gave the

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[417] Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," 48.
[418] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0228], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Emphasis added.
[419] Ibid.
[420] Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," 49.
[421] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0228], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives.
[422] Saleh, "On Iraqi Nationality: Law, Citizenship, and Exclusion," 49.

regime an excuse to deport us."[423] The "North Iraq Dataset" in the *Hizb al-Ba'ath al-'Arabi al-Ishtiraki* (Ba'ath Party) records include documents created by security, intelligence, military, and Ba'ath Party and government agency offices which detail the bureaucratic apparatus of the Iraqi state.[424] Specifically, they include documents wherein Iraqis are "identified" by ethnicity and deported or detained for reasons of "treason" or "threat to the regime." Times of war often result in scapegoating of those deemed suspicious; however, the way in which the victims, especially without a reconciliation process, interpret these events serves as a fragmenting mechanism. This is partly why in post-2003 Iraq, political elites found the rhetoric of *mathloomiyah* (oppression/suffering) especially instrumental in mobilizing their communities and in turn, *sectarianized* the social and political spheres. More than scapegoating, however, is the context of repression of opposition or threats to an authoritarian regime; in the 2006 Dujail trial, the Iraqi High Tribunal's first trial, found Saddam Hussein and six others guilty of "crimes against humanity based on torture, forced deportation, imprisonment, wilful killing, and other inhumane acts committed against hundreds of villagers in southern Iraq after an assassination attempt against Saddam Hussein in 1982."[425]

Towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the regime launched systematic attacks against the north of Iraq targeting Kurds, Assyrians, Shabak, Yazidis, Turkomans and Mandaeans, destroying a large number of their villages.[426] This is known as *al-Anfal* and included military operations, chemical attacks, concentration camps in the forms of "detention centres" and mass

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[423] [Video Documents from post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [1094], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Emphasis added.
[424] North Iraq Dataset, *Hizb al-Ba'ath al- 'Arabi al-Ishtiraki in Iraq* (Ba'ath Party) records 1968-2003, Hoover Institution Archives.
[425] Trahan, "A Critical Guide to the Iraqi High Tribunal's Anfal Judgement: Genocide Against the Kurds," 309.
[426] Ibid.

executions, especially of "battle-age" men.[427] This eight-phased campaign eliminated an estimated 182,000 Kurds in 1988; the Iraqi High Tribunal in Baghdad found that "more than 3,000 villages were destroyed, leaving 'tens of thousands of victims.'"[428] The Anfal trial, which began on August 21, 2006, heard the testimony of seventy-seven complainants who generally described one or more of the following aspects of their experiences: attacks on Kurdish towns with chemical and conventional weapons, imprisonment and mistreatment in detention camps, and executions and burial in mass graves.[429] Similar to the violence against the south, the victims of the Anfal campaign in the north were targeted due to opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime. For Robert Brathwaite, two ethnically driven objectives of the campaign were to "eliminate potential subversive elements that were advocating for Kurdish political rights and eliminate and/or force resettlement of large Kurdish population centers in Northern Iraq."[430] Brathwaite's argument is not wrong but his analysis is rooted in the conventional literature's representation of Iraq as ethnically divided, and can be nuanced further. The Ba'ath regime was an oppressive regime where the citizen is "Arab" – specifically defined – and much of the opposition is characterized in *ethnic* terms, meaning the Shi'a are revolting because they are "Iranian" or the Kurds are revolting because they are "Kurd" and not Iraqi. Bassam Yousif challenges the "sectarian" lens used to understand these events by arguing, "the principal oppressor of Shi'ites who put down the 1991 uprising, for example, was a Shi'ite: Muhammad Hamza al-Zubeidi."[431] Indeed, Saddam's Ba'ath Party was an "equal opportunity killer at most times, its principal

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[427] This campaign has been well documented by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other human rights groups. It has also been commemorated through oral traditions of these peoples. I accessed some of these documents in Arabic at [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [*Anfal*], [0231], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives.
[428] Trahan, "A Critical Guide to the Iraqi High Tribunal's Anfal Judgement: Genocide Against the Kurds," 306.
[429] Ibid., 311-312.
[430] Brathwaite, "Dirty war: chemical weapon use and domestic repression," 334.
[431] Yousif, "The Political Economy of Sectarianism in Iraq," 361.

criteria being Iraqis' loyalty to the regime, not their ethnic or religious background."[432] In other words, these revolts are not intrinsically ethnic – even if they take on ethnic tones; rather, they are the inevitable backlash against an exclusively "Arab" regime wherein citizenship and in turn, civil rights are not granted equally to all members of the population, regardless of ethnicity.

Following the invasion of 2003, much literature emerged regarding the violence and political, social and economic oppression against the Shi'a majority and the Kurdish minority.[433] This research cannot look at all the atrocities committed against these peoples in great detail; both communities were largely oppressed during different periods by the Ba'ath regime, which was predominantly based on the ideology of Arab nationalism.[434] Of course, we need to differentiate between historical accounts of these peoples in Iraq and each community's "national project" that at times, were (are) in direct opposition to each other. This is especially true in the case of the national aspirations of both the Assyrians and the Kurds whose claims are frequently in opposition and whose interactions politically with each other and with the state have been contradictory and complicated. The next section uses a "history from below" theoretical framework to re-tell the story of Iraq by re-inserting the Assyrians.

2.5 History from "Below:" Re-inserting the Vulnerable Minorities

Much work has been done by critical race, indigenous, and decoloniality scholars to show the processes by which Enlightenment ideals have shaped and narrated the story of history and

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[432] International Crisis Group, "The Next Iraq War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict," 6-7.

[433] Of course, these two communities were not the only ones who suffered under the previous regime. However, I am referring to major works in Iraqi studies that have largely focused on the atrocities committed against these two particular groups. This narrative is predominant and has been popularized following the 2003 invasion academically, Officially and in the media, most likely because these two groups have been in the position to tell their stories. See Berlatsky, *Genocide and Persecution: The Kurds,* 2013; Noorbaksh, "Shiism and Ethnic Politics in Iraq," 2008; Kelly, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide,* 2008; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 2003.

[434] The Ba'ath Party Collection has detailed accounts of not only atrocities in the north and south of the country but orders for individual arrests or harassment during the Iran-Iraq war. I accessed this Collection in March 2015.

knowledge, and of geography, politics and economics.[435] In *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada,* Sunera Thobani posits that the national subject is exalted above all others as the "embodiment of the quintessential characteristics of the nation and personification of its values, ethics and civilizational mores."[436] The national subject, in short, is constructed. On the other hand, the outsider is a "figure of concern," "properly defined as devoid of the qualities and values of the nation – as being quite alien to these – the stranger provokes anxiety, if not outright hostility."[437] Similarly, Joyce Green writes, "we come to know ourselves through the selective, collective construction of significant events that form a unifying mythology – unifying for those who are included; alienating for those who are excluded."[438] Drawing on this understanding of the relationship between power, nation-building – nation-*making,* and history, I ask, how, can we re-tell the history of the Other? Moreover, *why* is this important to political analysis? I suggest the "history from below" literature as conceptualized by Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thomson and as developed later by scholars of the Subaltern Studies Group are useful tools in re-inserting those who have been erased or "cast out."[439]

This approach allows us to capture a people's recollection of the events during and after the invasion in 2003 as these will endure after the fact and even perhaps influence Iraq's perception of itself and in turn, influence its behaviour both inside (its nation-building project) and outside its borders (its foreign policy). As previously mentioned, Cronin defines subaltern as a term used to refer to "numerically large, even preponderant, groups such as the urban poor, the

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[435] See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 2012; Dussel, *Politics of Liberation,* 2011; Mignolo and Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option,* 2013; Tamdgidi, "Editor's Note: I Think; Therefore, I Don't – Tackling the Enormity of Intellectual Inadvertency," 2013.
[436] Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada,* 3.
[437] Ibid., 4.
[438] Green, "Towards A Detente with History*: Confronting Canada's Colonial Legacy," 86.
[439] I am drawing on Razack, *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics,* 2008 to think about how Assyrians have come to lack the "right to have rights."

emerging working class, the peasantry and to smaller but sociologically salient groups such as slum dwellers and the unemployed."[440] I am using it to refer to a wide range of groups who are socially, economically, politically, and ideologically marginalized. This approach is especially relevant to postwar Iraq as it looks at the ways in which the excluded "might not only resist but sometimes manipulate, negotiate, and collude with the authorities even to the extent of acting as agents of political or social repression."[441] In other words, studying those on the margins not only gives the silenced a voice to narrate their story, but it can also tell us "about the nature of the powerful, whether classes, regimes, states or economic relationships."[442]

Drawing on Subaltern Studies and "history from below," what would it look like to think about vulnerable minorities when analyzing post-2003 Iraq? First, it invites us to consider the processes by which groups *become* a minority. For example, Assyrians are a minority today but this fact, when historically contextualized, tells us a story of conquest, assimilation, Arabization and Kurdification, dispossession, and cultural appropriation.[443] The same story can also be told by other groups in Iraq such as the Yazidis.[444] It is important to define "minority" in order to examine the different ways and levels in which power operated in Iraqi society. The Kurds, who

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[440] Ibid., 2.
[441] Ibid., 3.
[442] Cronin, *Subalterns and Social Protest*, 18.
[443] The removal of Assyrians from their ancestral lands that coincide with the geographical entity which is present-day Iraq can be traced through historical periods. For example, in 1933 during the Simele Massacre wherein over sixty villages were razed. For a detailed account of the destruction of these villages, see Donabed, *Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining: Illuminating Scaled Suffering and a Hierarchy of Genocide from Simele to Anfal*, 2010; From the 1960s and onwards, the Iraqi government engaged in the removal of Assyrians from their lands in various phases and to different degrees. See Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, "Cultural Rights and Democracy: Iraqi Assyrians a Case Study for Government Intervention," 2006. Another notable historical period is the Anfal Campaign in 1988. See Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century*, 2015. The invasion of 2003 continued this history of cleansing areas in Iraq from their original inhabitants. This occurred in cities where entire districts like Dora in Baghdad were emptied, in the north, which became the Kurdistan Regional Governorate and in Mosul following the occupation of ISIS.
[444] Asher-Schapiro, "Who Are the Yazidis, the Ancient, Persecuted Religious Minority Struggling to Survive in Iraq?" 2014; Savelsberg, Hajo and Dulz, "Effectively Urbanized: Yezidis in the Collective Towns of Sheikhan and Sinjar," 2010; Acikyildiz, *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion,* 2014; Henne and Hackett, "Iraqi Yazidis: Hazy Population Numbers and a History of Persecution," 2014.

are a distinct linguistic and ethnic community, are a minority in terms of number of population in comparison to the majority of the population, who are Arabs. While the Kurds under the Ba'ath regime (and even since the inception of the modern state of Iraq) suffered politically, economically and socially when compared to the Arab majority, they were included in the political process, even if from the margins. The large majority of works on Iraq, especially after 2003, include Kurds and their ability or inability to negotiate their identity and political future with the Iraqi state, which is seen as an "Arab" state.[445] The atrocities committed against the Kurds, specifically the *Anfal* campaign (1986-1989), have been documented by scholars and human rights specialists alike.[446] Despite being perceived (and treated) as a "problem" by the Iraqi state under the Ba'athist regime, the Kurdish identity or their existence was included in the national census, both in 1978 and 1989. Furthermore, despite this perception of Kurds as a "problem" hindering the project of "Arab" Iraq, the state and its various regimes negotiated with the Kurds, and enacted policies aimed at their integration. This could be due to the sizable number of the Kurdish population residing inside Iraq's borders but also due to its relative political and military power (for example, the Kurdish militia, the *Peshmerga*).

Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between two inextricably intertwined categories of minority as a *number* and minority as *vulnerable.* Assyrians, Yazidis, Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkomans and others were more vulnerable under the Ba'ath regime, mostly because

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[445] All major works in Iraqi studies include chapters on the "Kurdish question" in Iraq. See Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 2003; Dodge, "Iraqi Transitions: From Regime Change to State Collapse," 2005; Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 2007; Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History,* 2009; Polk, *Understanding Iraq: A Whistletop Tour from Ancient Babylon to Occupied Baghdad,* 2006; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq,* 2012; Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century: Regime Change and the Making of a Failed State,* 2015.

[446] The Kurdish victims of Anfal have been well documented. Both scholarship and general knowledge commonly associate Anfal with Kurds. However, the Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak, Mandaeans, and Turkomen continue to be erased from the story or glossed over. While the Kurds constitute a majority in the north of Iraq today, the number of victims must be considered in proportion to the population of each community, especially for communities whose 'minority' status is a result of generational and systematic genocide and ethnic cleansing campaigns.

they underwent a process of erasure during the nation-building practices of the Ba'ath Party. This erasure during the Ba'ath period set the stage for these minorities' political, cultural and economic marginalization in post-2003 Iraq. Specifically, these minorities were arguably more vulnerable after the 2003 invasion and during the "re-building" of Iraq; the majority of these groups have either completely left Iraq, or significantly dwindled in number due to targeted persecution and genocide without their own militias or government protection.[447] That is, while violence, in all its forms, has been inflicted on both the Kurds and the Shi'a at different times and in different measures, these two communities are not at the risk of extinction like the vulnerable minorities. This is especially true of the post-2003 period, during which the vulnerable minorities did not enjoy the state's protection or their own militias' protections as in the case of the other communities in Iraq. In his report for the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Mokhtar Lamani, previously Special Representative of the Arab League in Iraq, laments "Iraqi minorities are facing a disproportionate level of violence and instability, which threatens to drive them out of Iraq permanently."[448] Moreover, "while Iraqi minorities make up only five percent of the total population, they comprise more than 20 percent of the displaced population."[449] All Iraqis have suffered during the 2003 war, but minorities faced exceptional threat; the percentage of minorities displaced is much higher. Lamani reports, "more than 80 percent of the Mandaean population has been forced to flee; for Christians and other ethnic or religious groups, nearly 60

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[447] See Bowring, "Minority Rights in Post-war Iraq: An Impending Catastrophe?" 2012; Hanish, "Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaeans in Iraq: A Survival Issue," 2009; Ferris and Taylor, "The past and future of Iraq's minorities," 2014; Taneja, "Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's Minority Communities since 2003," 2007; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Isis Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities," 2014; Minority Rights Group International, "Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul," 2015; Ferris and Stoltz, "Minorities, Displacement and Iraq's Future," 2008; Lamani, "Minorities in Iraq: The Other Victims," 2009.
[448] Lamani, "Minorities in Iraq: The Other Victims," 5.
[449] Ibid.

percent of their populations are displaced."[450] In simple terms, these vulnerable minorities face the threat of extinction in post-2003 Iraq.

Second, a "history from below" framework allows us to look inside a group such as the Assyrian community and analyze the effects of fragmentation on their political and economic position in the Iraqi state. Even before 2003, the Assyrian identity has been either erased or fragmented along sectarian lines. Almost all Iraqi Studies refer to Assyrians as either "Christians," effectively erasing their identity and in turn, their ties to their homeland, or by denominational sect such as Chaldean or Syriac. The same occurs in the media, international human rights organizations, and policy briefs for decision makers. This fragmentation has been internalized by Assyrians themselves as they navigate the sectarian political system in post-2003 Iraq, which greatly undermines their ability to negotiate their political and economic position.

Third, including vulnerable minorities in the analysis serves to disrupt the narrative of Iraq as comprised by three major groups or a Muslim/Arab state. The disruption of this narrative has important implications. For one, it further problematizes the literature on dividing Iraq across sectarian lines (Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd), especially in terms of what would be "Kurdistan." Naming the north of Iraq Kurdistan today is largely uncontested; however, much of the Assyrian community perceives this land as occupied. Accordingly, while Assyrians constitute a *minority* in the north of Iraq today, their claims of Indigeneity to this land complicate what has been simplified as a story of suppressed Kurdish nationalism under Arab regimes. This is not to say that Kurdish nationalism was not suppressed under the Ba'ath regime. Rather, I am emphasizing that the story is more complex and includes the suppression of an indigenous minority by both Arab and Kurdish parties.

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[450] Ibid.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to problematize the conventional narrative of post-2003 Iraq, which has focused on sectarianism as an inherent characteristic of Iraqi society. That is, the idea that Iraq is a fragmented state lacking an overarching national identity has served as a conventional explanation for Iraq's inability to democratize after regime change. I argued that while ethno-religious diversity as well as economic and political competition between these groups are a defining feature of Iraqi politics, I have challenged the notion that these necessitate or inevitably result in violence. I used critical scholars such as Ismael and Fuller, Khoury and Haddad to argue that sectarian identities must be historically contextualized and analyzed in a dynamic way to be meaningful. That is, examining *relations* between sects or groups is more fruitful, allowing for historical context as well as factors such as foreign intervention, economic competition or state-building. Most importantly, I have argued that the work of critical scholars such as Alnasseri, Ismael and Sluglett help us understand the role of foreign powers' *politicization* of these sectarian identities to meet their interests. I have also problematized the notion that Iraq lacks a "national" identity because despite the origins of such concepts as the state or nationalism, it is inaccurate to deny Iraqis' attachment to an entity that is "Iraq." Finally, I related the idea of sectarianism to the idea of Arab exceptionalism, and critiqued both as simplistic and essentialist.

In the next section of the chapter, I juxtaposed the top-down, elite-driven state-building model imposed on Iraq during the British Mandate with the similar model implemented by the Anglo-American occupation in post-2003. Both models used sectarianism as a tool to realize their geostrategic and economic interests. Similarly, both models operated under the assumption

that they were "building" Iraq from "scratch" with the underlying notion that Iraqis were inherently incapable of governing themselves. Moreover, both models involved the imposition of sectarian policies from a foreign, imperial, hegemonic power, although to different extents. Finally, I argued that both of these powers greatly misunderstood Iraqi society and politics, and more importantly, operated under Orientalist misconceptions of Iraqi society

The next section examined the exclusive and violent state-building model of the Ba'ath Party under Saddam Hussein using both archival research and critical scholars. I focused on this period because it was the most recent and most traumatic period in Iraq's state-building history. This section attempted to highlight some of the most violent moments of this period in order to re-tell the story from the perspective of the marginalized or from "below." To that end, I offered accounts of the denaturalization and deportation of Shi'a Arabs and Kurds, which was undertaken under the suspected "Iranian" identity of this religious community during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). I also provided an account of the *Anfal* campaign carried out in the north of Iraq against the Kurds, Assyrians, Yazidis and other communities residing in this region. I suggested that rather than understanding the revolts in the north and the south in "ethnic" or "sectarian" terms, they can be understood as the inevitable *political* opposition to an oppressive, exclusive and ethnically nationalist regime in an ethnically diverse society. This is not to say that ethnic identity did not play a role; rather, I mean to complicate the simple or conventional narrative, which focuses solely on these explanations.

While identity alone is not consequential, marginalizing and erasing the identity of Iraqi minorities is tied to their political and economic marginalization. Examining Iraqi state-building under the Ba'ath party is important for this study because this identity of Iraq served as the basis for our understanding of Iraqi society and politics in post-2003. That is, analysis of post-2003

Iraq was and is based on these perceptions of Iraq as being comprised of three groups – Sunni Arabs, Shi'a Arabs and Kurds – and the marginalization of the latter two groups by the Ba'ath regime. Moreover, these three groups have been portrayed as naturally incapable of co-existing in a democratic Iraq. This perception was widely held by scholars (including Iraqi scholars), media, international human rights groups, and policymakers who relied heavily on Iraqi exiles. As will be seen in the following chapters, this understanding of Iraq was the basis for treatment of Iraqis during and after the invasion, occupation policies, nation-building, and who to count as an ally. Allies were favoured when establishing the Coalition Provisional Authority, Constitution Writing Committee, and heavily funded and supported in each election to form government.[451]

Aside from the other problematic aspects of the invasion I have mentioned in this chapter and will examine in the next chapter, this means that from the very beginning, the nation-building project as imposed by the Anglo-American occupation was inherently undemocratic. It not only solely included political elites that were largely unrepresentative of Iraqis, it excluded a significant portion of Iraqis who did not belong to the three major blocs. The erasure of these peoples was already underway during the Saddam Hussein era; this policy was continued in post-2003 Iraq and reached catastrophic proportions. The following chapters aim to analyze post-2003 Iraqi society and politics beginning with the next chapter, which critically examines the global and international context of the invasion.

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[451] Al -Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 2014.

Chapter 3: Post-2003 Iraq – Global Context

> Let me tell you why military engagement with Saddam
> Hussein's regime in Baghdad is not only necessary
> and inevitable, but good.
>
> **Thomas Barnett, Senior Strategic Researcher,**
> **US Naval War College, March 2003**

3.1 Introduction

The US-led removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003 took place in the context of a broader political agenda for "state-building" in the post-Cold War World. "This has taken place against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War, the uneven and incomplete transition to globalization, and the emergence in geopolitical terms of an ostensibly unipolar world centered on US economic and political primacy and bolstered by overwhelming US military power."[452] The Iraqi calamity is one such instance –episode –of the current crisis of the nation-state system. Since the end of the Second World War, the international sphere has been organized based on liberal and realist ontologies. Specifically, Bretton Woods economic agreements and the Marshall Plan were intended to "extend the geographical zone of democratic, free market states encompassing North America, Western Europe and Japan."[453] Moreover, institutions such as the United Nations, which were embedded within a liberal conception of international order, became the cornerstone of our modern world.[454] The Allies implemented a Realist perspective of security in the international system; security alliance institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were designed to meet the most pressing issue of the post-war era: the "need to contain an expansionist Soviet Union."[455] Throughout this period the less powerful of the international system, the Global South, came to be the site for "proxy wars" between the two superpowers – the United States (and their allies) and the Soviet Union. Accordingly, interventions – military or otherwise – are not new in the international arena. However, "the contemporary agenda for state-building" in the Global South has developed in the post-Cold War order.[456] That is, since the collapse of the bipolar Cold War order, state-building has become increasingly evident. The

[452] Berger, "Beyond State-Building: Global Governance and the Crisis of the Nation-State System in the 21st Century," 7.
[453] Litwak, *Regime Change,* 17.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Litwak, *Regime Change,* 17.
[456] Robinson, "State-Building and International politics: The Emergence of a 'New' Problem and Agenda," 2.

post-Soviet era, Robinson argues, "created a belief that the state in general is in crisis and that this crisis is deeper for certain forms of state so that intervention to save them is more necessary than in the past."[457]

The international context is important to analyzing "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq, because Iraq is one particular instant in a history of foreign intervention in the Global South. Chowdhry and Nair posit that "power in mainstream, particularly realist and neo-realist, IR scholarship is closely bound up with notions of the state, sovereignty, anarchy, and order."[458] Placing the invasion of Iraq in 2003 in the international context allows us to understand how power operates at the center and what that means on the ground in the periphery. But more importantly, the regime change in Iraq was orchestrated and implemented through an invasion by the world hegemon followed by a top-down project of "democratic nation-building" through occupation. At the most basic level, this is why analyzing Iraqi domestic politics alone is insufficient to understanding the contemporary political violence and state crisis in Iraq. In this context, a postcolonial approach is helpful to unpack power and its manifestations. More Specifically, as Chowdhry and Nair remind us, "mainstream IR is premised on an understanding of power that privileges hierarchy, 'rationality,' and a predominantly Eurocentric worldview, thus mystifying the ways in which states and the international system are anchored in social relations."[459] But critical postcolonial analysis provides "insight into the ways in which the imperial juncture is implicated in the construction of contemporary relations of power, hierarchy, and domination."[460] The previous chapter challenged the ideas of sectarianism and Arab exceptionalism as two inadequate answers to the question of why Iraq has not transitioned to a

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[457] Ibid., 3.
[458] Chowdhry and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations,* 3.
[459] Chowdhry and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations,* 3.
[460] Ibid., 12.

stable democracy after more than a decade of "democratic nation-building." The aim of this chapter is twofold; first, it challenges the discourse and practice of state-building, intervention, and democracy promotion in the international system. Second, it seeks to unpack the discourse and political context, which enabled the invasion of Iraq in 2003 in order to show the relationship between the international and the domestic.

This chapter relies on critical discourse analysis of three interrelated factors that interrelatedly framed the dominant narrative of regime change as the only viable solution to the problem of the rogue state of Iraq. To that end, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the neoliberal interventionist and neo-conservative actors, which pushed for a policy of regime change in Iraq through military force. Accordingly, I critically examine organizations such as the Project for New American Century (PNAC) as well as the rhetoric of individuals. I also provide a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of state-building, which is critiqued from a critical postcolonial perspective to demonstrate the continuities between "state-building" and "development" theories. State-building is not merely theoretical; it has practical implications. This is examined through the RAND report's policy recommendations for nation-building in Iraq post-invasion.[461] Second, this study acknowledges the conventional critics of the decision to invade Iraq; however, this section argues that these critiques were limited and demonstrates the need for critical postcolonial approaches in analyzing the invasion. Next, I outline the "Official" story of the period leading up to the invasion through a discourse analysis of the US government's official speeches from the period of 2001-2008. I use the findings of the Chilcot Report to demonstrate that the "evidence" compiled during this period to

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[461] RAND Corporation is an American global policy think tank originally formed to provide research and analysis to the United States Armed Forces. Partly funded by the Department of Defense, it produced a report in 2003 entitled, "America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq." Chapter ten focuses on recommendations for nation-building in post-2003 Iraq.

invade Iraq was largely unjustified.[462] The fourth section of this chapter conducts a critical

discourse analysis of a defense document, the National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United

States, which was produced in 2002. This Document constitutes the third factor, which along

with neoliberal interventionist and neoconservative organizations and proponents, and

Presidential Addresses during this period, work together to construct Iraq as a security threat.

This section also problematizes the conventional discourse in the media and academia, which

legitimized the ideology of "democracy promotion" or "liberation" in the international system.

Finally, I look at the relationship between neoliberalization and democracy promotion. I argue

that rather than "democracy promotion," the neocolonial policies are applied in a seemingly

inconsistent pattern across the international system in order to expand a global order of

neoliberal free markets.

3.2 Neoliberal Interventionism and Neo-Conservativism: The Push for War

Several factors came together advocating for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as the next

phase of the Global War on Terror but these by no means emerged suddenly after the events of

9/11. Inderjeet Pramar traces three developments, which had a significant impact on the makings

of a new direction in US foreign policy: an increase in influence of conservative and

neoconservative organizations like the Heritage Foundation during the 1990s; the rise of a

subcomponent of conservativism from the 1970s – neo-conservativism; and, the development

since the late 1980s of a liberal interventionism underlined by a staunch belief in democratic

peace theories.[463] For Pramar, 9/11 was the "crucible for the effective fusion of those three

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[462] Chilcot, *The Iraq Inquiry*, 2010.
[463] Pramar, "Foreign Policy Fusion: Liberal interventionists, conservative nationalists and neoconservatives – the New Alliance Dominating the US Foreign Policy Establishment," 178.

developments."[464] The development of "liberal interventionism" or "liberal hawkishness" pushing for democracy promotion and humanitarian interventionism as the way to ensure American and global security[465] is important. Ultimately, Pramar argues, it is this development that "evidences the growth of conservative power, and enhances the power of the conservative foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration."[466] Similarly, Roberts, Secor and Sparke trace what they observe as a widespread form of "neoliberal geopolitics," which is implicated in "war-making."[467] This neoliberal geopolitical vision for the world, they argue, is "closely connected to neoliberal idealism about the virtues of free markets, openness, and global economic integration."[468] This is echoed more forcefully by Rustin and Massey who argue that what has come to be known as "'liberal imperialism' has become the rationale for this post-cold-war and ostensibly post-colonial version of the west's imperial project."[469] This section briefly highlights the role played by major actors subscribing to this worldview who pushed for invading Iraq in 2003.

Laurence Toenjes contends "the activities of fourteen organizations were coordinated by individuals who comprised a web of interlocking memberships."[470] Specifically, he identifies five organizations, which were at the forefront and who played pivotal roles in the decision to go to war: the Project for a New American Century (planning), the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (coordination), the Centre for Security Policy (information dissemination), the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee (policy action), and the Jewish Institute for National Security

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[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid., 179.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Roberts, Secor and Sparke, "Neoliberal Geopolitics," 886.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Rustin and Massey, "Rethinking the Neoliberal World Order," 120.
[470] Toenjes, "US Policy Towards Iraq: Unravelling the Web," i.

Affairs (interface with Israel).[471] The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a think tank whose members included government officials such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, helped shape news and policy in the lead-up to the War.[472] The PNAC produced a report in 2000 entitled, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New American Century." Much of this report's content was later reproduced by the Bush administration's strategic doctrine outlined in a document entitled "The National Security Strategy of the United States," [473] which I analyze later in this chapter.

The PNAC's Report outlines recommendations for the current post-Cold War international order. Specifically, the "military's job during the Cold War was to deter Soviet expansionism. Today its task is to secure and expand the 'zones of democratic peace.'"[474] That is, while America ensured its security with *deterrence* of the Soviet Union, today, security can only be achieved by "*compelling* regional foes to act in ways that protect American interests and principles."[475] The Report's essential point is,

> The 1990s have been a 'decade of defense neglect.' This leaves the next president of the United States with an enormous challenge: he must increase military spending to preserve American geopolitical leadership, or he must pull back from the security commitments that are the measure of America's position as the world's sole superpower and the final guarantee of security, democratic freedoms and individual political rights.[476]

Throughout the Report, Iraq is identified as an "adversary" along with other states such as Iran and North Korea whose designs to acquire nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles can only be interpreted as a threat to American security. Moreover, the only way to ensure security and

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[471] Ibid., 12.
[472] Altheide and Grimes, "War Programming: The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War," 619.
[473] Kellner, "Preemptive Strikes and the War on Iraq: A Critique of Bush Administration Unilateralism and Militarism," 421-422.
[474] PNAC, "Rebuilding America's Defense: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," 2.
[475] Ibid., 3. Emphasis added.
[476] PNAC, "Rebuilding America's Defense: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," 4.

American "pre-eminence" is increase military spending and presence in key regions such as the Persian Gulf.[477] The PNAC's influence and shaping of fundamental foreign policy in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq has been posited by several studies.[478] Specifically, the PNAC played a major role in the decision to go to war as "news sources, cabinet members, presidential advisers, journalists, and publishers."[479]

Individuals also played a role in the call for war. As early as 1998, neoconservatives and neoliberal interventionists such as William Kristol and Robert Kagan were clamoring for regime change in Iraq. They argued that if the United States is committed "to insuring that the Iraqi leader never again uses weapons of mass destruction, the only way to achieve that goal is to remove Mr. Hussein and his regime from power. Any policy short of that will fail."[480] Punitive measures such as "no-fly zones" or "bombing campaigns" will not stop Saddam Hussein from manufacturing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) Kristol and Kagan vehemently argue. This is because it is "*clear* that Mr. Hussein wants his weapons of mass destruction more than he wants oil revenue or relief for hungry Iraqi children."[481] The result of failing to remove him from power will mean "the United Nations inspection regime will have collapsed; American diplomacy will be in disarray. Those who opposed military action all along – the Russians, French and Chinese – will demand the lifting of sanctions, and Mr. Hussein will be out of his box, free to *terrorize* our allies and threaten our interests."[482] Along with highlighting the push

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[477] Ibid., 9, 14, 17.
[478] See Boaduo, "Invasion of Iraq: Introspective Analysis of US Long Term Foreign Policy in the Middle East," 2012; Altheide and Grimes, "War Programming: The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War," 2005; Pramar, "Foreign Policy Fusion: Liberal Interventionists, Conservative Nationalists and Neoconservatives – the New Alliance Dominating the US Foreign Policy Establishment," 2009; Kellner, "Preemptive Strikes and the War on Iraq: A Critique of Bush Administration Unilateralism and Militarism," 2004;
[479] Altheide and Grimes, "War Programming: The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War," 626.
[480] Kristol and Kagan, "Bombing Iraq Isn't Enough," 1998.
[481] Kristol and Kagan, "Bombing Iraq Isn't Enough," 1998. Emphasis added.
[482] Ibid. Emphasis added.

for the use of military force against a sovereign state for the purpose of regime change, it is

important to emphasize that Kristol and Kagan are pointing to the failure of the sanctions to have

their intended effect of changing the behaviour of their target, Saddam Hussein. However,

Riverbend,[483] an Iraqi woman blogger during the post-invasion period, recalls the sanctions era:

> I remember 13 years of sanctions, backed firmly by the US and UK, in the name of WMD nobody ever found. Sanctions so rigid, we had basic necessities, like medicine, on waiting lists for months and months, before they were refused. I remember chemicals like chlorine, necessary for water purification, being scrutinized and delayed at the expense of millions of people…American long-term memory is exclusive to American traumas. The rest of the world should simply 'put the past behind,' 'move forward,' 'be pragmatic' and 'get over it.'[484]

This emphasis on the "failure of sanctions" to keep Saddam Hussein in line while ignoring the

human costs of these sanctions is a by-product of the narrow and sole focus on *states* as the main

actors in politics rather than the *human* failure and devastating impact of those sanctions.[485]

Kristol and Kagan's push for the removal of Saddam Hussein continued; in a 2002

article, where they respond to Democrat critics of military action in Iraq, they argued that "*for

the war on terrorism to succeed, Saddam Hussein must be removed.*"[486] Urging the American

government to act, they warned, "whether or not we remove Saddam Hussein from power will

shape the contours of the emerging world order, perhaps for decades to come. Either it will be a

world order conducive to our liberal democratic principles and our safety, or it will be one where

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[483] For security reasons, Riverbend does not disclose her real name. Her blogs were published in a collection by a feminist publishing house in 2003.

[484] Riverbend, "Baghdad Burning," 2003.

[485] See Ismael and Haddad, *Iraq: The Human Cost of* History, 2004; Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000," 2001; Mueller and Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," 1999; Halliday, "The Impact of the UN Sanctions on the People of Iraq," 1999; Mazaheri, "Iraq and the Domestic Political Effects of Economic Sanctions," 2010; Shehabaldin and Laughlin, "Economic Sanctions Against Iraq: Human and Economic Costs," 1999.

[486] Kagan and Kristol, "What to do about Iraq," 2002. Emphasis added.

brutal, well-armed tyrants are allowed to hold democracy and international security hostage."[487] Moreover, "everyone agrees" that Saddam Hussein is "dangerous" and a "permanent menace to the region."[488] Similarly, "no one questions" the basic "facts" about Saddam Hussein's weapons programs: both UN weapons inspectors and western intelligence agencies have warned that "Iraq possessed the necessary components and technical knowledge to build nuclear bombs in the *near future*."[489] According to Kagan and Kristol, Saddam Hussein also harbors known terrorists; "reliable reports from defectors and former UN weapons inspectors have confirmed the existence of a terrorist training camp in Iraq, complete with a Boeing 707 for practicing hijackings, and filled with non-Iraqi radical Muslims."[490] Finally, and the only point they concede to their critics, the "Afghanistan model" is insufficient for Iraq. That is, the US should "support Ahmad Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress" because they are "essential parts of any solution in Iraq."[491] However, they maintain that the Iraqi opposition is not enough and neither is precision bombing; American ground forces in *significant* number are required for success in Iraq. We know that much of the "evidence" used to convince the public and the international community of the imminent threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his quest for WMDs was fabricated. I discuss the findings of the Chilcot Report later in this chapter after analysis of President Bush's rhetoric in his push for military force against Iraq. Furthermore, the reliance on Iraqi exiles and opposition would prove to be very problematic as I discuss in chapter four.

Sebastian Mallaby, senior fellow for international economics at the Council on Foreign Relations, echoed the PNAC's rhetoric about the role of the US in maintaining international

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[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.

security in his 2002 *Foreign Affairs* article, entitled "The Reluctant Imperialist: Terrorism, Failed States, and the Case for American Empire."[492] He called for America to pick up the imperial torch and criticized America's seeming unwillingness to engage in "nation-building."[493] "U.S. foreign policy," he argued, "must again respond to circumstance – this time to the growing danger of failed states."[494] His article makes a few references to the grave threat of "chaos" and America's responsibility (and burden) to answer this call to ensure world peace. The dichotomous relationship between the "chaotic other" and "orderly us" is important; as previously highlighted in the theoretical framework, the international system is premised on the idea that chaos is a threat and it must be kept outside to ensure "our" security through "order." Mallaby recalls "when such power vacuums threatened great powers in the past, they had a ready solution: imperialism"[495] and grieves the fact that "after more than two millennia of empire, orderly societies now refuse to impose their own institutions on disorderly ones."[496] He does however, emphasize –quite accurately –a link between contemporary models for "nation-building" and past models for "development." This too is important; this need to impose "order" and "democracy" on "disorderly" and "authoritarian" states are not new. The discourse has changed slightly with the times but at its very core, it is reminiscent of the old adages of "development." In other words, like "development," the "discourse on state-building is shot through with paternalism and downplays the ability and necessity for local political action as the source of state-building."[497]

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[492] Mallaby, "The Reluctant Imperialist: Terrorism, Failed States, and the Case for American Empire," 2002.
[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid., 6.
[495] Ibid., 2.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Robinson, "State-Building and International politics: The Emergence of a 'New' Problem and Agenda," 2.

Philip Cunliffe argues that "a right conceptual link must be built between the so-called post-Westphalian political developments of the 1990s (principally the rise of human rights and its corollary, the 'new interventionism') and the state-building projects of the present."[498] He contends, "this link is the exercise of power without responsibility. What this means is the attempt to exercise power unencumbered by the requirements of accountability or representation."[499] I concur with Cunliffe that the international human rights regime has "inexorably, but largely inadvertently, expanded the remit of Western power over non-Western societies."[500] Cunliffe posits that "it is the elevation of the human rights subject relative to the traditional rights of states that is key to understanding the emergence of state-building from the period of the *new interventionism*."[501] However, in his argument there is no analysis of the racialization of the "subject" of human rights, and the instrumentalization of human rights in the discourse of the Global War on Terror. More specifically, the violation of human rights in Iraq by the Saddam Hussein regime is not new; however, as will be shown in the next subsection, the Official discourse of the Bush administration changed its focus from the *security threat* posed by the Saddam Hussein regime to the *liberation* of the Iraqi people when WMDs were not found in Iraq after the invasion. This was not lost on Iraqis; Salam Pax,[502] a young Iraqi architect whose weblog from Baghdad attracted 20,000 visits a day during the war wrote,

> Thank you for your keen interest in the human rights situation in my country. Thank you for turning a blind eye for thirty years…thank you for ignoring all human rights organizations when it came to the plight of the Iraqi people. Thank you for keeping sanctions when you knew they only weakened the people and had no effect on the Government…So what makes you so worried about how I manage to live in this shithole

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[498] Cunliffe, "State-Building: Power Without Responsibility," 52.
[499] Ibid.
[500] Ibid
[501] Ibid., 57.
[502] For security reasons, Salam Pax does not disclose his real name on the blog. This blog was later published into a book in 2003

now? … You had the reports all the time and you knew. What makes today different from a year ago?[503]

David Chandler highlights an important distinction between state-building in the post-1945 era, which "depended on state sovereignty and political solutions decided by local actors,"[504] and contemporary international state-building models, which "insist on the regulatory role of international institutions and suggest that *locally derived political solutions are likely to be problematic*."[505] Chandler importantly stresses the "increasingly commonplace assumption that democracy is good for the Western powers but tutelage is better for states judged to be 'under stress', at 'risk of failure' or in post-conflict 'recovery.'"[506]

Critical postcolonial approaches enable us to place this argument within the context of the process of knowledge production. This reveals the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the foreign policies of powerful global actors such as the United States. In the dominant discourse and practice, the concepts of modernity and progress have been conceived of as "Western constructs" and other societies are frozen in the "traditional" stage and have no ideas regarding "development" or "progress." Put differently, these concepts might have been applied universally but were thought to be Western constructions; development was seen as something that would be brought *to* other societies. That is, development was seen as something that happened naturally in the "West" but needed to be transferred to the non-West. This is evident in both classical Modernization theories[507] and their re-articulation and re-emergence in the

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[503] Pax, *The Baghdad Blog*, 48.
[504] Chandler, "The State-Building Dilemma: Good Governance or Democratic Government?" 71.
[505] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[506] Ibid., 75.
[507] See Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto,* 1960; Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," 1959; Inkeles and Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Changes in Six Developing Countries,* 1974.

1990s.[508] Slater argues, "far from being an innocent, neutral, and objective discourse of how a society might become modern, modernization theory was part of the conceptual architecture of a diffusing imperialist logic."[509] These ideas regarding development are important because they are part of a similar lineage of "liberating" or "democratizing" the Other. More specifically, the Other cannot liberate or democratize itself.

History teaches us that all societies are capable of making changes from *within*. The idea that "traditional" societies remain traditional indefinitely unless external forces (the West) develop, modernize, liberalize, or democratize them is a construction with violent consequences. The invasion and occupation of Iraq and the resulting chaos that has engulfed the country since 2003 is case in point. Economic and political progress or democracy is universal but has different definitions, paths, and/or institutions based on the particular cultural, political and historical contexts of specific societies. More specifically, I am arguing against the imposition of the Western hegemonic/colonial discourse of progress or democracy on non-Western societies, not against the universal concept of democracy itself.

In *The Colonial Signs of International Relations,* Himadeep Muppidi argues, "the care of the Other…is structured as a space in which compassion, assistance, aid, action and intervention all emerge without an engagement of the specificities and particularities of the local."[510] This can be seen in the policy briefs on Iraq prior to the Anglo-American invasion, which also demonstrates the linkages between theory and practice. In 2003, RAND[511] produced a report containing the results of a study on best practices for nation-building, the purpose of which was

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[508] See Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, 2005; Inglehart and Norris, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2004.
[509] Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial: Rethinking North-South Relations,* 85.
[510] Muppidi, *The Colonial Signs of International Relations,* 119.
[511] This research was produced by RAND's National Security Research Division, which conducts research for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified commands, the defense agencies, the Department of the Navy, the US intelligence community, allied foreign governments, and foundations.

to "analyze US and international military, political and economic activities in post-conflict situations since World War II, determine key principles for success, and draw implications for future US military operations."[512] This Report states following the British Mandate, "Iraq was left with no tradition of pluralist democracy. Instead, politics have always been about authoritarian rule and the settlement of disputes by force."[513] At the same time, the Report claims, "the majority of the population, the Kurds and Shiites, have no real tradition of representation as communities in national Iraqi politics; they will now have to be brought into the polity."[514] This lack of understanding the Iraqi polity and society had direct policy implications, which in the case of Iraq, were severely detrimental. Specifically, this understanding of Iraqi politics led to the old colonial policy of a quota system in Iraq based on sectarian identities, which resulted in exclusionary practices in Iraq. As Sa'ad Jawad argues, the Americans invaded Iraq with the presumption that the "Sunnis had ruled Iraq for over 400 years"; these ideas were very much supported by the Kurdish and Shiite parties who collaborated with Bremer as it benefited their position in the "new Iraq."[515] Similarly, Hussain Shaban argues, "subduing 'the other' under the pretext of having been victimized in the past, or the pretence of representing the majority's voice in the present are causal factors in the collapse of Iraqi society and the fragmentation of Iraq's national identity."[516] In sum, inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the American understandings of Iraqi society and politics were translated into erroneous policy during the occupation and contributed to the disintegration of the Iraqi state.

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[512] Dobbins et al, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, 2003.
[513] Ibid.,169.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Jawad "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," 31.
[516] Shaban, "*al-hiwar al-Mutamadin, Bremer fi al-mizan,*" (Bremer in the Scale), 2011.

3.3 Conventional Critics of the Invasion: Why We Still Need a Postcolonial/Decolonial Critique

There were notable realists who critiqued the neoliberal push for the invasion of Iraq. Recognizing that Realism is not a homogenous theory and that there are debates within this approach and among these scholars, this section outlines some of these voices; however, drawing on critical postcolonial approaches, I argue that this critique was narrow and insufficient.

John Mearsheimer begins his critique with a distinction between the neo-conservative Bush Doctrine and the predominant theory of international relations that preceded it. He argues, "Neo-conservative theory –the Bush Doctrine –is essentially Wilsonianism with teeth. The theory has an idealist strand and a power strand: Wilsonianism provides the idealism, an emphasis on military power provides the teeth."[517] He goes on to explain that the neo-conservative preference for unilateralism over multilateralism stems from the belief that military force is so effective due to 'bandwagoning.'[518] The distinction between balancing and bandwagoning is a fundamental difference between neo-conservative and realist theories.[519] The idealist or Wilsonian strand of neo-conservative theory focuses on promoting democracy, which is seen as the most powerful political ideology.[520] Indeed, the Bush Doctrine emphasizes the importance of spreading democracy in the Middle East; Iraq arguably constitutes the first major effort in this regard.[521]

In contrast, Realism is underpinned by a fundamental belief in balancing. Simply put, a state will always respond by ensuring its national security through building up its military when

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[517] Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs. Neo-conservatism."
[518] Jawad "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," 31.
[519] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* 1979.
[520] Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs. Neo-conservatism." 2005.
[521] See Litwak, *Regime Change,* 2007; Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans,* 2004; Chomsky, *Hegemony of Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance,* 2004; Hammond, "The Bush Doctrine, Preventive War, and International Law," 2005; Romaya, *The Iraq War: A Philosophical Analysis,* 2012.

threatened by another state. According to realist logic, if any state becomes too powerful, balancing occurs wherein the other great powers will build up their militaries and form a coalition to balance against the aspiring hegemon. Mearsheimer also reminds us that contrary to the Bush Doctrine, Iran and North Korea did not stop their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons following the invasion of Iraq; they worked harder in this effort.[522] Also, Europe did not adhere to the Bush Doctrine; France and Germany did not support the invasion of Iraq. In short, for realists, nationalism, not democracy, constitutes the most powerful political ideology. Here, Mearsheimer cites lessons from the Vietnam War, the Israeli experience in Lebanon, the Soviet experience in Afghanistan as a few examples of the potency of nationalism as a political ideology.[523]

Perhaps one of the most infamous instances of a Realist critique of a military invasion of Iraq was the letter entitled "War with Iraq is <u>NOT</u> in America's national Interest" published in the *New York Times* in September 2002. In this letter signed by thirty-three scholars of international security affairs such as Barry Posen, Stephen Walt, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer, Al Qaeda is argued to pose a "greater threat to the US" than Iraq.[524] While the signatories recognize that "Saddam Hussein is a murderous despot,"[525] they also argue that "*credible* evidence that Iraq is cooperating with Al Qaeda" has not been provided.[526] More importantly for them, the lack of a "plausible exit strategy" is emphasized because "Iraq is a deeply divided society that the United States would have to occupy and police for many years to create a viable state."[527] Finally, a war with Iraq, they warn, will jeopardize the "campaign

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[522] Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs. Neo-conservatism." 2005.
[523] Ibid.
[524] *New York Times,* "War with Iraq is <u>NOT</u> in America's National Interest," 2002.
[525] Ibid.
[526] *New York Times,* "War with Iraq is <u>NOT</u> in America's National Interest," 2002. Emphasis Added.
[527] Ibid.

against Al Qaeda by diverting resources and attention from that campaign and by increasing anti-Americanism around the globe."[528] In sum, these scholars are careful to reiterate their recognition that war is necessary to ensuring national security and that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. However, ultimately, military force is to be used "*only* when it advances US national interests"[529] and "war with Iraq does not meet this standard."[530]

Many of these arguments are repeated in Mearsheimer's and Walt's *Foreign Affairs* article in January 2003 entitled "An Unnecessary War." For both scholars, the preventive war camp and the moderate supporters of inspections both accept the same *wrong* premise that "Saddam Hussein is not deterrable, and he cannot be allowed to obtain a nuclear arsenal."[531] However, they argue, "the historical record shows that the United States can contain Iraq effectively – even if Saddam has nuclear weapons – just as it contained the Soviet Union during the Cold War."[532] In response to the argument that Saddam Hussein's record of using chemical weapons against his own people is evidence of his ability to use these weapons against the US or its allies, Mearsheimer and Walt point out that "none of his victims had a similar arsenal and thus could not threaten to respond in kind."[533] In other words, Iraq's calculations would be different with regards to the United States because of Washington's capability to *retaliate.[534]* Finally, they also respond to the argument that Iraq sponsors terrorist activities in the region and internationally. Citing the lack of "credible evidence" that Iraq was connected to the 9/11 attacks or that Iraq is "collaborating with Al Qaeda against the United States," they suggest the Bush administration "signal" to Saddam Hussein that they would "hold him responsible if some

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[528] Ibid.
[529] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Mearsheimer and Walt, "An Unnecessary War," 52.
[532] Ibid., 52.
[533] Ibid., 55.
[534] Mearsheimer and Walt, "An Unnecessary War," 55. Emphasis added.

terrorist group used WMD against the Untied States, even if it cannot prove he is to blame."[535] In short, the United States should focus on Al Qaeda and deter Iraq – even if Iraq acquires nuclear capability.

The Realist critique of the invasion and occupation was western-centric and focused on the cost of the war for the US, the changing balance of power in the region, instability among other things. In other words, while they problematized this decision, they did so without attention to the impact of the war on the lives of Iraqis and the future of the country. This is due to Realism's epistemological and ontological foundations; their point of departure is not universal but *particular* to their historical and geographical space, which places the *state* as the focus of analysis. Decoloniality writers remind us the modern processes within which the West came to represent the "universal" – and it was not "natural." Grosfoguel, a sociologist from Puerto Rico, argues "the hegemonic European paradigms that have informed western philosophy and sciences in the 'modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system' for the last 500 years assume a universalistic, neutral, objective point of view."[536] However, our knowledges are always situated.[537] Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano defines European modernity/rationality as the intersubjective universe produced by the entire Euro-centered capitalist colonial power as elaborated and formalized by the Europeans and established in the world as an exclusively European product and as a universal paradigm of knowledge and of the relation between humanity and the rest of the world.[538]

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[535] Ibid., 58.
[536] Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," 213.
[537] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," 1998.
[538] Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 2007.

Accordingly, while these scholars are anti-invasion, their critique is narrow and lacks moral or ethical concerns for those who would undoubtedly pay the price for such a war – the Iraqi people. They are concerned with the cost of war and potentially increasing or inciting anti-Americanism across the globe but do not historicize this sentiment. The very label of anti-Americanism trivializes or serves to make ambiguous what is an anti-colonial and/or anti-imperial sentiment in a region, which has been oppressed and marginalized by colonial modernity. For instance, what Mearsheimer labels as "nationalism," which he argues is a more potent political ideology than democracy, is perhaps Iraqi opposition or resistance to yet another foreign power occupying their state and "building" it in its image. This is an addition to the lack of *context* for such a sentiment in the first place. As such, I am specifically using a critical postcolonial theoretical framework as opposed to the conventional theories of IR such as Realism and Liberalism. Postcolonialism highlights the ways in which the rhetoric of the "Global War on Terror" is embedded within larger and long-standing ideas regarding modernity, morality and ethics, and democracy rooted in the Western canon and conventional readings of texts such as those of philosopher Immanuel Kant. However, postcolonial scholars "always return to gaps in Kant's representations of the eighteenth century and the implications of such gaps for the validity of his theory."[539] This is important because it allows us to ask the question of whether the omission of such an important institution like slavery from Western moral thought diminishes the moral reach of the resulting theories of republicanism and cosmopolitanism.[540]

As such, conventional international relations theories such as realism and liberalism, having their origins in our understandings of ourselves and the Other, can be subject to similar criticisms. Despite their claims to universality and objectivity, they are the voice of "empire" – a

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[539] Grovogui, "Postcolonialism," 251.
[540] Grovogui, "Postcolonialism," 251.

predominantly hegemonic voice narrating the story of international relations. The aim of this research is to shift our reference to begin with the *Other* in order to examine the interplay between global and domestic forces in a country located in the Global South, a postcolonial state whose regime was changed via military invasion (unilaterally) by a world hegemon. Moreover, this shift allows for a perspective from the colonized or occupied to offer a counter-narrative of politics, in this case of post-2003 Iraq.

3.4 The War on Iraq: The "Official" Story

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was part of the Global War on Terror, which began with the tragic events of 9/11. These attacks provided the context for a Bush Doctrine, the right to a forward, pre-emptive attack to prevent similar or further terrorist attacks.[541] This marked a conceptual shift in the use of force in the international system since the Second World War. As previously mentioned, the international structure built after WWII reflected the influence of both realist and liberal schools of thought.[542] Accordingly, deterrence was the order of the day during the Cold War; force was used to prevent states from committing unjust or illegal acts *outside* their borders (or spheres of influence).[543] In the post-Cold War period, the realist notion of *deterrence* has been replaced by the liberal concept of *compellence*; force is used to persuade states to commit just or legal acts *inside* their borders.[544] There is also another shift in the

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[541] Litwak, *Regime Change,* 2007.
[542] Ibid.
[543] Henkin et al, *Right v. Might: International Law and the Use of Force,* 1991.
[544] For discussion of this transformation in the post-Cold War period, see Litwak, *Regime Change,* 2007; Pierson, Kiefer and Brands, *The Use of Force After the Cold War,* 2003; Kuwali, *The Responsibility to Protect: Implementation of Article 4 (h) Intervention,* 2010. Relatedly, see works on Responsibility to Protect and its increasing importance in the post-Cold War global system such as Doyle, "International Ethics and the Responsibility to Protect," 2011; Bellamy, *Global Politics and the Responsibility to Protect: from Words to Deeds,* 2011; Chandler, "The Responsibility to Protect: Imposing the Liberal Peace," 2004; Pattison, *Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect,* 2010.

international system from *legitimacy* to *legality*. This too reflects a wider liberal transformative project that has gained momentum in the post-Cold War period; Iraq is one extreme manifestation of this shift.

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent Global War on Terror, the Bush administration and the mainstream media set the context for the discourse on the subject. In this chapter I use a *critical discourse analysis* of major speeches made by President George Bush (2001-2009) to demonstrate the way in which the Bush administration continuously used the discourse of "security" and "weapons of mass destruction," a "clash of civilizations" and later, "liberation" to justify its policy of a Global War on Terror and its unilateral, militaristic, and aggressive foreign policy towards the Other. This is juxtaposed with "Official findings" on the Iraq War, which were a result of the Iraq Inquiry that produced the Chilcot Report in 2016. The Chilcot Report, as will be shown, reveals that the Bush and Blair administrations exaggerated and fabricated facts/evidence in order to *construct* Iraq as an imminent threat to international peace and security. This Report is important because it demonstrates the ambiguities, inconsistencies and exaggerated or fabricated "evidence" used in 2003 to facilitate aggressive action against Iraq.[545] A discourse analysis of major national speeches and Addresses to Congress also yields an important pattern. From 2001 to 2003, the discourse was mostly focused on national security; that is, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the *imminent* threat it posed to the "free world." However, from 2004 to 2008, the focus from security shifted to that of "democracy promotion," "liberation," and "democratic nation-building." Both periods are analyzed in this section in order to examine the predominant narrative during the period leading up to the invasion of Iraq and the occupation.

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[545] I am using "Official" sources to dismantle the case against Iraq in this subsection because even according to their own standards, they were aware at the time that their evidence was thin and still took aggressive action.

In his 2001 speech to Congress, President George W. Bush argued that the threats of the 21st century "range from terrorists who threaten with bombs to tyrants in rogue nations intent upon developing weapons of mass destruction."[546] Bush also reiterates American exceptionalism by calling for a "distinctly American internationalism"[547] to be a "force for good and a champion of freedom,"[548] which for Bush, are equivalent to "free markets, free trade, and freedom from oppression."[549] More importantly is the emphasis on a "strong military"[550] in order to "keep the peace."[551] The theme of security is continued in the 2002 State of the Union Address where Bush claimed Iraq, North Korea and Iran, "along with their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world."[552] Inciting fear seems to be the main effect in the 2002 Address: "in any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."[553] In the following months both President Bush and then British Prime Minister Tony Blair would amount "evidence" of their case against Iraq and Saddam Hussein's imminent threat to the world due to his weapons of mass destruction program. In September 2002, after a "brainstorming session on Iraq" with Blair, Bush was reported to have said,

> UN weapons inspectors, before they were denied access to Iraq in 1998, concluded that Saddam was six months away from developing a weapon. He also cited satellite photos released by a UN agency Friday that show unexplained construction at Iraqi sites that weapons inspectors once visited to search for evidence Saddam was trying to develop nuclear arms.[554]

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[546] Bush, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on Administration Goals," 2001.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Ibid.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Bush, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2002.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Collins, "Bush, Blair: Saddam Has to Go," 2002.

Twenty days later, the *Washington Times* reported that "the International Atomic Energy Agency says that a report cited by President Bush as evidence that Iraq in 1998 was 'six months away' from developing a nuclear weapon does not exist."[555] This would not be the first evidence of the fabricated nature of the "reports" on the threat posed by Iraq.

According to the Chilcot Report, "Iraq was viewed as a less serious proliferation threat than other key countries of concern – Iran, Libya and North Korea – which had current nuclear programmes."[556] Moreover, "Iraq's nuclear facilities had been dismantled by the weapons inspectors."[557] The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) judged that "Iraq would be unable to obtain a nuclear weapon while sanctions remained effective."[558] Most importantly, the Report maintains, "there was no credible evidence of Iraqi transfers of WMD-related technology and expertise to terrorist groups."[559] However, while Blair and Bush consistently argued that Iraq constituted a threat which "had to be dealt with,"[560] the Report confirms that "the focus on Iraq was not the result of a step change in Iraq's *capabilities* or *intentions*."[561] In addition, on March 8, 2003, a paper commissioned in preparation for Prime Minister Blair's meeting with President Bush in early April 2002, to inform the public about the dangers of nuclear proliferation and WMD in Iraq, was evaluated and found insufficient to convince the public of such a threat.[562] In fact, former British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw is reported as stating, "the paper has to show why there is no *exceptional* threat from Iraq. It does not quite do this yet."[563]

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[555] *Washington Times,* "Agency Disavows Report on Iraq Arms," 2002.
[556] Chilcot, "Executive Summary," 70.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Chilcot, "Executive Summary," 70.
[561] Ibid., 71. Emphasis added.
[562] Chilcot, "Executive Summary," 71.
[563] Ibid. Emphasis added.

Moreover, the Report states that the statements prepared for, and used by, the United Kingdom (UK) government in public after 2001, "conveyed more *certainty* than the JIC Assessments about Iraq's proscribed activities and the potential threat they posed."[564] These papers and "evidence" were gathered in a "dossier" on Iraq in the months leading up to the invasion. Section 4.1 of the Report states that "Iraqi capability and willingness to conduct WMD terrorism was not known with any certainty."[565] Moreover, with relation to constructing or dispersing chemical or biological accents, the JIC judged that it had "no reliable intelligence of any Iraqi intent. Nor did it have any credible evidence of covert transfers of WMD-related technology and expertise to terrorist groups…on balance we judge the threat of Iraqi WMD terrorism is slight…"[566] Finally, Section 4.2 of the Report tells us, "the inquiry shares the view of the Butler Review that the dossier contained a stronger assessment in relation to Iraqi chemical weapons production than was justified by the available intelligence."[567]

In his 2003 State of the Union Address, President Bush remained focused on the same theme of national and international security: "Today, the gravest danger in the war on terror, the gravest danger facing America and the world, is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical and biological weapons."[568] If "they" are outlaws, then "we" are law keepers; Bush says, "once again, this nation and our friends are all that stand between a world at peace and a world of chaos and constant alarm. Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility."[569] This is also the first Address

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[564] Chilcot, "Section 4.1 Iraq WMD Assessments, Pre-July 2002," 2. Emphasis added.
[565] Ibid., 43.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Chilcot, "Section 4.2 Iraq WMD Assessments, July to September 2002." 239.
[568] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2003.
[569] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2003.

where we see a careful outline of all of Saddam Hussein's crimes, depicting him as a monster with an insatiable desire to stockpile weapons of mass destruction.

Whereas Realist IR theories tell us all states in a self-help system build up their arms in order to ensure their security, Bush cautioned "the only possible explanation, the only use he [Saddam Hussein] could have for those weapons, is to dominate, intimidate, or attack."[570] President Bush's statement was problematic. It is now evident that accusing Saddam Hussein of stockpiling weapons of mass destruction was unfounded. More importantly, President Bush's statement reveals a more fundamental problem with the dominant narratives of IR theories and more importantly here, when these theories shape foreign policy doctrine. According to conventional IR theories, the state is a rational interest-maximizer and remains the main actor in international politics. The problem, however, is that these theories have *racialized rationality* and the "Other" is often placed outside the realm of "rationality" or "reason." In his *International Relations in Uncommon Places,* Marshall Beier asserts that mainstream IR theory is narrated by the "hegemonologue of colonialism/advanced colonialism,"[571] of the "privileged European/Euro-American, typically male, voice."[572] That is, the *rational* actor that ensures "his" security by building up "his" arms is a hegemon, and a subaltern in the Global South is never a rational actor making choices according to the rules of the game.

A tenet of Neoliberal interventionism is military power to ensure security of the state, which legitimizes weapons stockpiling, nuclear proliferation, and the use of force in the international system. However, even this conventional narrative of IR is not consistently and evenly applied to all cases. For example, Saddam Hussein was simply depicted as a "madman"

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[570] Ibid.
[571] Beier, *IR in Uncommon Places*, 15.
[572] Ibid., 16.

who is a "threat to the peace and security of the free world" rather than a "rational" actor "maximizing" his security. In other words, I am pointing to the *inconsistencies* with which conceptual tools are used to understand the behaviour of states in the Global North and the Global South. Moreover, I am highlighting the process by which these actors are vilified in the conventional narrative, which serves to facilitate particularly violent responses from the hegemon whose duty it is to ensure order and security in the international system. The process of "securitization and "racialization" of Iraq, in sum, facilitated the Anglo-American invasion in 2003. This approach also includes narratives and discourses that involve the "Shi'a crescent" or "sectarianism" to describe alliances and animosities or armed conflict between states in the Middle East. This is important when compared with analyses of actors in the Global North, which are more likely to involve assessments of geopolitics, military or economic calculations and other concepts in IR theory that help us understand states' behaviour in the international system.

3.4.2 2004-2008: The "Liberation" of Iraq

The narrative of liberation sometimes accompanied the discourse of securitization of Iraq before the invasion. However, the Bush administration clearly shifted the focus from "security" to "freedom" when there were no WMD found in Iraq after the invasion.

In his 2004 State of the Union Address, President Bush declared, "as long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends."[573] There is a clear shift in the 2004-2008 Addresses from security to "freedom" and "building a democratic Iraq." In fact, there is absolutely no mention of weapons of mass destruction from 2005-2008.[574] The war and

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[573] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2004.
[574] See Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2005-2008.

occupation, which resulted in the displacement of millions and estimated hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties[575] was characterized Officially by the Bush administration as a "victory of freedom."[576] Moreover, Iraqis who resisted the occupation were depicted as "raging and fighting against freedom."[577] The new Iraqi government was increasingly depicted as "allies in our cause for freedom"[578] and having a common enemy – terrorists whose "aim is to seize power in Iraq and use it as a safe haven to launch attacks against America and the world."[579] It is important to note that the violence or terror in post-invasion Iraq is mainly a result of the power vacuum from the removal of Saddam Hussein by the US. More importantly, the people who have suffered at the hands of these "terrorists" were everyday Iraqis, whose suffering seems to be missing from this conventional discourse.

Related to this is a shift in 2007-2008 when "sectarianism" gains a spotlight in Iraq. In his 2007 Address, President Bush contended "the Iraqi Government must stop the sectarian violence in its capital. But the Iraqis are not yet ready to do this on their own."[580] However, sectarian violence, as discussed before, is not inherent to Iraqis and sectarian identities are politicized at various times by various elites. This ahistorical understanding of violence in post-2003 Iraq has also consistently infantilized Iraqis in the Official discourse: "If American forces step back before Baghdad is secure, the Iraqi Government would be overrun by extremists on all sides."[581] Drawing again on the dichotomy between chaos and order, President Bush claimed, "For America, this is a nightmare scenario; for the enemy, this is the objective. Chaos is the

[575] Iraq Body Count is a public project which records the violent deaths resulting from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. It includes civilian deaths caused by the Anglo-American coalition, Iraqi government forces, paramilitary and criminal attacks. Their evidence is drawn from media reports, hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures.
[576] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2005.
[577] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2006.
[578] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2006-2008.
[579] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2006.
[580] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2007.
[581] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2007.

greatest ally, their greatest ally in this struggle."[582] This narrative continues in the 2008 Address

when the American public and the world are reminded of America's righteous struggle against

freedom-hating terrorists and extremists.[583] The idea that America is bequeathing freedom and

democracy onto Iraqis, and Iraq is in desperate need of liberation and civilization are recurring

themes throughout this War and is to be interrogated in the next section of this chapter.

3.5 National Security Strategy: Defense Preparation for War

This section critically analyzes defense documents such as the **"**The National Security

Strategy of the United States of America" (NSS), which was published in September of 2002.

This Document begins with the assertion that the "great struggles of the twentieth century

between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and

a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise."[584] It

continues, "in keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for

unilateral advantage."[585] Rather, America seeks to create "conditions in which all nations and all

societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic

liberty."[586] Starkly different from previous threats, the danger today is posed by "terrorists" who

are "organized to penetrate open societies." Importantly, the Document asserts that America will

"act against such emerging threats *before they are fully formed"[587]* as a "matter of common sense

and self-defense."[588] In this way, the NSS augments the neoliberal interventionist voices I

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[582] Ibid.
[583] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2008.
[584] National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Ibid.
[587] National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002. Emphasis added.
[588] Ibid.

analyzed in the first section of this chapter and President Bush's Addresses when it claims that the United States had acquired "irrefutable proof that Iraq's designs were not limited to the chemical weapons it had used against Iran and its own people, but also extended to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and biological agents."[589] The only line of defense, then, is "our" willingness to be "prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients *before* they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies."[590] While this marks a significant "shift" in the international use of force from *deterrence* to *compellence* in conventional literature,[591] the United States has a long history of intervention under the guise of maintaining order in the international system, which is reflected in their foreign policies in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.[592] Iraq, in this instance, can be placed within this context of a global hegemon intervening in various places.

There is a subsection of the Document that outlines America's values of "liberty" and "justice," which are "right and true for all people everywhere."[593] The national security strategy of the United States, this Document tells us, must "start from these core beliefs and look outward for possibilities to expand liberty."[594] This ideology of "expanding liberty" is rooted in the liberal belief that democracies do not fight each other, which has made democratic peace theory "conventional wisdom" for many Western policymakers.[595] However, Mojtaba Mahdavi argues that "cultural and/or institutional similarity cannot alone explain war and peace in global

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[589] Ibid., 14.
[590] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[591] Litwak, *Rogue States and US Foreign Policy,* 2000.
[592] I am referring here to the 1953 Coup in Iran, 1954 Coup in Guatemala, 1956-66 Coup in Indonesia, 1966 Coup in Ghana, 1973 Coup in Chile to name a few.
[593] National Security Strategy of the United States, 3.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Mahdavi, "The Challenge of Democratization in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Beyond the Democratic Peace Theory," 96.

politics;"[596] rather, "*geopolitics, realpolitik,* and real or perceived *security* threats"[597] offer better explanations for conflict and cooperation in the international system. To make his argument, Mahdavi points to the alliances between democracies and autocracies such as the "US-UK alliance with the Soviet Union in 1941" or the American alliance with "autocratic states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Tunisia before the Arab Spring, and pre-revolutionary Iran under the Shah regime."[598] In addition to democracies' involvements in *proxy wars,[599]* Mahdavi argues the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is an example of liberal democracies *creating* and *constructing* "phantom enemies," *exaggerating* "perceived threats," *demonizing* their "opponents" and using "fear tactics to pursue imperial and/or political agendas."[600]

The NSS includes numerous repetitions of remarks regarding "our" culture, which is liberal, dynamic, rational, and "their" culture, which is the opposite: illiberal, monolithic, static and irrational. But if there are indeed two cultures, then we are saying that "'their' actions do not derive from any concrete historical experience of oppression or injustice, or from the imaginative, improvisational practices through which "we" ceaselessly elaborate our world. 'Their' actions are simply dictated by the very nature of "their" culture."[601] These essentialist and simple accounts not only neglect the complexity of these events, but also erase instances of our violence against the Other that have frequently characterized the relationship between "us" and "them." Moreover, the NSS asserts that America will "defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants"[602] and will extend the peace by "encouraging free and open societies on every

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[596] Ibid., 98.
[597] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[598] Ibid.
[599] Ibid., 99.
[600] Ibid., 99. Emphasis added.
[601] Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 23.
[602] National Security Strategy of the United States, 2002.

continent."[603] If America is the site of universal values, then we can contextualize the discourse

of *"Islamic* terrorism" as if it were the first terrorism in history. Anthropologist Veena Das

writes,

> it is from this perspective that one can speculate why the talk is not of the many terrorisms with which several countries have lived now for more than thirty years, but with one grand terrorism-Islamic terrorism…what could this mean except that while terrorist forms of warfare in other spaces in Africa, Asia or the Middle East were against forms of particularism, the attack on America is seen as an attack on humanity itself.[604]

Again, it bears repeating that treating "Islamic terrorism" as distinct from "our" violence against

the Other serves to erase this history and ensures our continued monopoly of universal goods such

as justice, peace, and liberty. That is, we must challenge the idea that American violence is

intended to maintain peace and security and situate it as *violence.* The next section in this chapter

will focus on the relation between democracy promotion and neoliberalization in post-2003 Iraq.

3.6 Political Economy of Invasion: Neo-liberalization of Iraq?

After the end of the Cold War, Lilia Monzo argues, "democracy has been co-opted by the

transnational capitalist class, stripped of its socialist underpinnings, and made to appear

synonymous to the current neoliberal capitalism.[605] In this new world order, the US secured its

name as the world hegemon and "has designated itself the world's watchdog to 'protect' against

any and all dissent to capitalism and to spread 'democracy' across the world."[606] However, the

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[603] Ibid.
[604] Das, "Violence and translation," 2002.
[605] Monzo, "A Critical Pedagogy for Democracy: Confronting Higher Education's Neoliberal Agenda with a Critical Latina Feminist Episteme," 73.
[606] Ibid., 74.

US has a long history of supporting its "friendly tyrants" in the Global South.[607] The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is one example in a long history of supporting autocratic regimes and undermining or thwarting democratically elected, but "undesirable" leaders. As Samir Amin argues, "the only aim of this strategy is to impose on recalcitrant countries the 'market economy,' opening them up to and integrating them into the so-called liberal world system."[608] However, once achieved, Amin elaborates, "this objective becomes an obstacle to the progress of democracy in the victimized countries and is no way an advance in response to the 'democratic question.'"[609] Similarly, Monzo contends, "through its slogan as 'the greatest democracy in the world' the US uses cultural imperialism and warfare as tactics to erect capitalism across the world."[610] The case of post-2003 Iraq, I argue, is an excellent example of this policy.

Prior to the invasion, proposals for neoliberalizing the Iraqi economy were made by academic institutes, private research organizations and consulting companies.[611] The "roadmap" for Iraq's "economic reforms" was outlined in a May 2003 "classified document titled 'Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Sustainable Growth.'"[612] As Samer Abboud argues, "behind the absurdity of terms such as 'blunders,' 'mistakes' and 'errors' used to describe the

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[607] There are many contradictions in both the theory and practice of "humanitarian intervention" and/or the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the international system. R2P and humanitarian intervention have been widely critiqued in recent years. See Mahdavi, "A Postcolonial Critique of Responsibility to Protect in the Middle East." 2015; Mamdani, "Libya: Politics of Humanitarian Intervention," 2011; Mamdani, "Darfur, ICC, and the New Humanitarian Order," 2008. I set aside this critique in order to focus on a discussion of neoliberal and social democracy.
[608] Amin, "The Battlefields Chosen by Contemporary Imperialism: Conditions for an Effective Response from the South," 8.
[609] Ibid.
[610] Monzo, "A Critical Pedagogy for Democracy: Confronting Higher Education's Neoliberal Agenda with a Critical Latina Feminist Episteme," 75.
[611] See Svejnar, *A Strategy for the Economic Reconstruction and Development of Iraq*, 2003; Marcel and Mitchell, "Iraq's Oil Tomorrow," 2003; Barton and Crocker, "A Wiser Peace: An Action Strategy for a Post-Conflict Iraq," 2003; Cohen and O'Driscoll, "The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq," 2003.
[612] Looney, "The Neoliberal Model's Planned Role in Iraq's Economic Transition," 570.

catastrophe wrought on Iraq by the Anglo-American-led invasion and occupation lies the very

deliberate and calculated imposition of a neoliberal model of economic and political

governance."[613] This section will focus on four of the one hundred "Orders" Paul Bremer

imposed as the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (2003-2004) in Iraq after the

invasion. The neo-liberalization of Iraq involved a shift from a centrally planned economy

towards a market economy or to capital accumulation.[614] CPA Order thirty-nine was related to

foreign investment.[615] It included five elements: the privatization of state-owned enterprises,

which allowed foreign companies to buy Iraq's state-owned entities, including water services,

electric utilities, schools, and hospitals; complete ownership of all sectors except for oil and

mineral extraction, banks and insurance companies; "national treatment" of foreign firms

whereby local investors, businesses, and providers cannot be favoured over foreign ones;

unrestricted repatriation of profits, meaning no investment needs to be targeted to help

specifically damaged regions, communities or services; and forty year leases, locking Iraq into

contracts under these rules.[616]

Order forty shifted the *banking sector* from a "state-run to a market-driven system

overnight by allowing foreign banks to enter the Iraqi market and to purchase up to fifty percent

of an Iraqi bank."[617] Order thirty-seven instituted a fifteen percent *flat tax* in Iraq for both

corporations and individuals.[618] This is especially problematic because it fails to consider

differences between classes but also between people and corporations. That is, a flat tax serves to

"reduce the tax burden on the poorest in the economy, increase the burden on the middle class

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[613] Abboud, "Failures (and Successes?) of Neoliberal Economy Policy in Iraq," 425.
[614] Ibid.
[615] Juhasz, "Capitalism Gone Wild," 20.
[616] Ibid., 20-21.
[617] Ibid., 21.
[618] Ibid.

tremendously, and drastically reduce the taxes paid by the wealthiest in society."[619] Lastly, Order twelve liberalized *trade*, "eliminating nearly all trade barriers."[620] In addition, the right to strike was outlawed and unions were banned in key sectors.[621] However, the Interim Iraqi government, the Governing Council, was not given the power to change or write new laws; it could only confirm the decrees already in place.[622]

For Abboud, the failures of this economic policy are rooted in its "fundamental misreading of the economy and disregard of specific economic patterns that had developed over the previous decades."[623] Kamil Mahdi, an Iraqi economist, echoes this assertion and argues these policies ignored the socio-historical context of Iraq: the "economic arguments advanced in support of a neo-liberal policy agenda tend to rely on little in the way of analysis of Iraq's own economic conditions and the policy environment prevalent over the prolonged period of war and sanctions prior to the invasion in 2003 and in its immediate aftermath."[624] Mahdi writes, these policies were largely put forward by US officials, international organizations, policy think-tanks and advocacy groups. The underlying discourse of these arguments have tended "to offer a partial and selective interpretation of the historical record, ignoring many specific attributes of the Iraqi economy and disregarding changes in policy, economic institutions and prevalent conditions."[625] That is, senior US officials implemented policies underpinned by "their government's declared economic agenda, usually downplaying the effects of prolonged sanctions

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[619] Ibid., 21-22.
[620] Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," 25.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Mahdi, "Neoliberalism, Conflict and an Oil Economy: The Case of Iraq," 2.
[625] Ibid.

and the military destruction of infrastructure and overemphasizing the role of failed non-market and interventionist economic policies."[626]

These assumptions were erroneous and not informed by academic research. As Abbas Alnasrawi highlights, the war against Iran (1980-88), the militarization of the Iraqi economy, the invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf War and the sanctions regime (1990-2003) were major factors resulting in the catastrophic conditions in Iraq.[627] After 2003, the US project for neo-liberalization of Iraq tended to "treat war as a discrete event with consequences that can be identified, isolated and dealt with by ready-made measures and policy prescriptions."[628] The same argument can be made in terms of the effects of the prolonged severe sanctions imposed on Iraq: over a decade of sanctions were "treated as external to any domestic social processes, and institutional responses tend to be taken as passive." [629]

The neoliberal agenda in Iraq, Mahdi argues, was underlined by an assumption that economic and social policies were at a standstill since the late 1970s.[630] Moreover, the "same discourse of reform and liberalization that spread elsewhere in the Middle East and in other underdeveloped regions is brought to Iraq in a ready made fashion, only twenty years later than most other countries."[631] The underlying assumptions were not novel; the US-led occupying forces assumed that Iraqi society had not undergone changes since the late 1970s, and with a complete glossing over of repetitive wars and prolonged comprehensive economic sanctions, the neoliberal economic policy in Iraq was implemented. This policy was akin to "rapid liberalization, privatization and marketization,"[632] effectively dismantling institutions, social

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[626] Ibid.
[627] Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000," 2001.
[628] Mahdi, "Neoliberalism, Conflict and an Oil Economy: The Case of Iraq," 8.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Mahdi, "Neoliberalism, Conflict and an Oil Economy: The Case of Iraq," 2007.
[631] Ibid., 8.
[632] Abboud, "Failures (and Successes?) of Neoliberal Economy Policy in Iraq," 426.

welfare programs, labour markets, urban development and social relations. Moreover, these policies were implemented carte blanche. As Mahdi writes, an "alien *unaccountable* administration with unlimited powers set out to completely restructure the economy after largely destroying the highest decision-making institutions, structures of authority and the organizational arrangements."[633] The alien administration made up of exiles was limited in its ability to implement economic policies. The prolonged period of exile had weakened the ability of the new elites to "connect to daily social and economic issues and to articulate a program of action that met the needs of specific domestic socio-economic constituencies."[634] The limitations of this administration comprised of exiles who did not represent Iraqis are discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the role played by neoliberal interventionist and neoconservative actors in promoting a military invasion of the "rogue" state of Iraq in 2003. I contextualized these influences within the post-Cold War world order, which has been characterized by intervention via "state-building." Specifically, I critically analyzed the PNAC's Report, which argues for a shift from *deterrence* to *compellence* to ensure that foes and security threats in the system such as Iraq did not threaten America's interests. I also linked neoliberal intervention with theories of state-building. Drawing on postcolonial approaches, I situated the theoretical underpinnings of these to the process of knowledge production. I argued that the concepts of modernity and progress have been taken for granted as "Western constructs," rendering Other societies as "traditional" and in need of "modernizing" or "democratizing" or "development."

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[633] Mahdi, "Neoliberalism, Conflict and an Oil Economy: The Case of Iraq," 11. Emphasis added.
[634] Ibid., 13.

Challenging these notions, I argued that the concepts of "democracy" or "progress" are universal in the sense that all societies are capable of them but that democracy, progress or change have different paths and definitions based on the particular cultural, political, and historical context. I critically examined the RAND Report, which provided policy recommendations for nation-building in post-invasion Iraq in order to demonstrate that theory and practice are inextricably intertwined. That is, American ideas about Iraqi society and politics were Orientalist, which resulted in a problematic foreign policy decision to first invade Iraq and then erroneous and disastrous policies during the occupation to "democratize" Iraq.

Of course, there were prominent scholars who also critiqued the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. I highlighted the significant differences between the theoretical premises of Realism and neo-conservatism and neoliberal interventionism. I outlined some of the most infamous instances of such critiques such as the letter written to the *New York Times*, discouraging the US from invading Iraq and to focus on defeating Al Qaeda instead. However, drawing on postcolonial/decolonial thought, I argued that this critique was insufficient and unsubstantial largely due to its western-centric and state-centric context. I posited that a focus on the costs of the war for the American state or military is not only narrow but lacks moral or ethical concerns for those who would be most affected by such a decision to invade – the Iraqi people. Their understanding of the politics of the region is also limited due to their context. For example, what they label as anti-Americanism, I argued is resistance to further intervention in a region that has been historically oppressed and marginalized by colonial modernity.

Next, this chapter conducted a critical discourse analysis on the speeches made by the Bush administration prior to the invasion and during the occupation in order to problematize the decision to invade. That is, rather than beginning the story of what "went wrong" in Iraq during

the occupation as in much of the conventional literature, I critique the invasion itself as the first problem in the case of Iraq. I used the findings of the Chilcot report in 2016 to demonstrate the inconsistencies, inaccuracies, fabrications and exaggerations of the "evidence" used to invade Iraq. I also noted a significant pattern in the analysis of the Addresses: the period between 2001 and 2003, focused primarily on national security. This means that during this period, Iraq was constructed as an *imminent* security threat, which could only be prevented through military invasion. However, the period between 2004 and 2008, shifted the discourse from "security" to "democracy promotion" and "liberation" of the Iraqi people.

I provided a more detailed critique of the period between 2001 and 2003 as the focus of this chapter was the period prior to the invasion, when the policy of regime change was being promoted. I used critical postcolonial theories to argue that conventional IR theories have racialized "rationality." I problematized the inconsistencies in applying these conventional theories to understand the behaviour of states in the Global South. For example, the idea that Saddam Hussein is amassing weapons of mass destruction is constructed as a security threat endangering the peace and security of not only the United States, but of the *free world*, despite conventional realist explanations as mechanisms to ensure security in a self-help, anarchic international system. Somehow, heads of state in the Global South are outside the perimeter of conventional understandings of behaviour in the international system. Moreover, culturalist explanations often take precedence over geostrategic or geopolitical factors when analyzing the region of the Middle East. I elaborate on this argument in chapter five, which focuses on the regional context.

The period between 2004 and 2006 is critiqued through an emphasis on democracy promotion and liberating Iraqis. I emphasized here that the violence characterizing the period

after the invasion was due to the power and security vacuum created by the Anglo-American invasion, which removed Saddam Hussein's regime. I elaborate further on the detrimental impacts of this in chapter five when discussing the emergence of Al Qaeda in Iraq in 2003 and later, ISIS.

The third factor which I critically examined using a discourse analysis is the Official defense strategy outlined in the National Security Strategy of the United States, which also worked to securitize Iraq and proposed regime change via military force as the solution. Similar to the other factors analyzed in this chapter, such as the neoliberal and neoconservative organizations and individuals and the Official discourse by the Bush administration, this Document advocates for a global promotion of values such as "liberty" and "democracy." I contextually historicized violence in the international system using critical postcolonial approaches and argued that American violence must be situated as violence, regardless of American declarations of maintaining peace and security.

This chapter linked the "democratization" of Iraq with "neoliberalization" in order to argue that what is promoted across the globe is not democracy alone (or at all) but neoliberal capitalism. The prominent example of an alliance between the US and an autocracy is Saudi Arabia in a history of various other examples of undermining or thwarting democratically elected, but "undesirable" leaders. In the case of Iraq, the Bremer Orders implemented by the CPA in 2003 included, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, creating a conducive environment for foreign investment at the expense of the Iraqi economy and unrestricted foreign patriation of profits. Other Orders concerned de-nationalizing the banking sector, implementing a flat tax and liberalizing trade. Moreover, the Interim Iraqi Government, was not given the power to change or write new laws. Using the work of critical Iraqi scholars, I argued that the

neoliberalization of Iraq served American interests rather than "democratized" Iraq. Moreover, these economic policies failed to take into account the socio-political and historical context of Iraq, including repetitive wars and a decade of comprehensive economic sanctions.

In sum, this chapter sought to move beyond simple and essentialist endogenous factors such as sectarianism to explain and understand why Iraq failed to democratize after the invasion. Despite the mistakes of Iraqi ruling elites, which is discussed in the next two chapters, I argued in this chapter that the invasion of Iraq is the "beginning" of the story. That is, I critically examined the relationship between international factors on the domestic politics of the Iraqi state to demonstrate that domestic factors alone cannot explain what happened in post-2003 Iraq. The violence and socio-political situation in post-2003 Iraq must be situated within the context of a foreign invasion and occupation. This chapter focused primarily on the perspective from the US and the actors involved in the decision to invade. The next section will shift the focus to the margins and examine the perspective from the ground.

Chapter 4: Domestic Context – A Subaltern Account of Unrepresentative "Nation-Building"

> How could you believe that the Americans and the British who have subjected you to 13 years of inhumane and deadly sanctions – to which we lost 1,860,000 mostly children and elderly – would really work for you and your future? This is not realistic. You can change the regime yourself. No matter how long it will take, but if you do it yourself, you will reach better results than through the Americans.

Sa'ad Jawad, Professor of Political Science, Baghdad University, March 2016

4.1 Introduction

Since 2003 there has been much written on modern Iraqi history, Iraqi society and politics, and even more analyses of the current society and politics in post-Ba'ath Iraq.[635] This chapter, however, focuses on Iraqi articulations – *enunciations* of their social and political realities after the invasion from a decolonial/critical postcolonial perspective. A decolonial politics in part, means, to begin the analysis from the perspective of the Other. The previous chapter focused on the "international" aspect of post-2003 Iraq; this chapter shifts the focus to the "domestic." The chapter is based on data collected from semi-structured interviews with Iraqi experts, scholars and civil society activists who are currently residing in, or were in Iraq until very recently. Challenging the notion that the Iraqi state is divided along sectarian – Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurdish – lines, the research participants were not chosen based on religious sect or

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[635] See Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History,* 2013; Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 2007; Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq,* 2012; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq,* 2012; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 2003; Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 2015; Isakhan, *The Legacy of Iraq: From the 2003 War to the 'Islamic State,'* 2015; Lewental, "'Saddam's Qadisiyyah': Religion and History in the Service of State Ideology in Ba'thi Iraq," 2014; Haddad, "Political Awakenings in an Artificial State: Iraq, 1914-20," 2012; Al-Jamil, "Ali al-Wardi: An incomplete reading on the nature of Iraq's modern society," 2014; Alexander, "Political Opportunities and Collective Action in the Iraqi Revolution 1958-59," 2008; Visser, "Proto-Political Conceptions of 'Iraq' in late Ottoman Times," 2009; Hazran, "The Rise of Politicized Shi'ite Religiosity and the Territorial State in Iraq and Lebanon," 2010; Cole, "Iraq in 1939: British Alliance or Nationalist Neutrality Toward the Axis?" 2012.

ethnicity. Rather, they were chosen based on their role in the post-2003 nation-building process, their relevant expertise, and in some cases their vulnerable or marginal position. It is important to listen and reflect on the voice of the subaltern, because, as discussed before, subalternity refers to a condition of subordination and demonstrates how power functions at the center. While I did not choose the research participants based on sect, they are diverse in their sect (most were from mixed Shi'a-Sunni families), ethnicity and geographical location in Iraq. Geographical location was especially important in this context because the Anglo-American invasion and occupation looked very different in the north of Iraq, Baghdad, Mosul and the south. This chapter also includes data collected from interviews conducted by Amnesty International after 2003, which I accessed at the Hoover Institute through the *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* (Iraq Memory Foundation Issuances, 2003-2010). These interviews were conducted in Arabic with everyday Iraqis and are included to supplement the data from the interviews I conducted.[636]

Most critical Iraqi scholars and Iraqi research participants I interviewed vehemently objected to the idea that what the United States[637] was doing in Iraq was "democratic nation-building." Some of them believed in this idea before the invasion occurred; others came to this contention after witnessing occupation policies and their effects on Iraqi politics and society. Accordingly, this chapter has two aims: first, to problematize the unrepresentative elite-driven nation-building process of "democratization" in Iraq and second, drawing on Iraqi articulations of the state, to examine the potential for "democratization from below." I focus on multiple aspects of Iraqi domestic politics to achieve these aims.

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[636] There have been some works, which have been pivotal to telling the Iraqi story post-2003 using personal narratives. See: Kukis, V*oices from Iraq: A People's History, 2003-2009,* 2011; Riverbend, *Baghdad is Burning;* Pax, *The Baghdad Blog,* 2003.

[637] While it was a "Coalition of the Willing" that invaded, to Iraqis, the invasion and occupation was perceived as American and British.

In this project, I asked all the research participants the same questions, beginning with their perception of the invasion and occupation. These questions were intended to learn the story of the invasion and occupation from "the ground," but also to trace the different sentiments during the invasion, in the beginning of the occupation, a few years later and towards the end of the occupation until 2016. As discussed in the first chapter, not only did discourse in the media change throughout this decade but debates in academia did as well: the most problematic of which were the ideas that Iraq was inherently sectarian and therefore, unable to democratize, and therefore that "sectarianism" was the major reason for the violence that characterized post-2003 Iraq. As such, the research participants were asked about sectarianism before and after 2003 and how they perceived the violence. The participants were also asked in their view "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq. This was intended to first, provide a *counter-story* to the conventional narration of why the "democratic nation-building" project in Iraq had failed, and second, to shift the *loci of enunciation* from the conventional voices that had predominantly narrated the story of post-2003 Iraq to Iraqis themselves. Related to this, one of the objectives of this work was to emphasize Iraqi articulations of what the new Iraq should/ought to look like. Accordingly, the last set of questions focused on Iraqi political aspirations for the new Iraq. This chapter, in sum, moves through these themes, using the data collected from semi-structured interviews with Iraqis conducted over Skype and from other primary Arabic sources. All the research participants were given the option of conducting the interview in Arabic and these were translated, with attention to and emphasis on the linguistic and cultural equivalent, to English. The interviews conducted by Amnesty International, which I accessed through *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* (Iraq Memory Foundation) were also in Arabic, which I translated to English.

This chapter is organized as follows. I begin with Iraqi articulations of the contested term of *democracy* to show that democracy is not a Western "good" to be "transferred" or "given" to the Other. This is followed by Iraqi perceptions of the invasion and occupation; this serves to provide preliminary articulations of the Iraq story post-2003. Third, I argue the state-building of the government was largely undemocratic, unrepresentative, unaccountable and unreflective of Iraqis. This can be seen very clearly in the composition of the Interim Governing Council, the composition of the Constitution Writing Committee, and the candidates for elections, as well as the lack of transparency and public debate. The chapter then moves to provide Iraqi articulations of the state; specifically, I examine Iraqi perceptions of sectarian relations before and after 2003, and their perceptions of the violence that engulfed their country after the invasion. I argue that many of the domestic problems seen in post-2003 Iraq are not a result of Iraqis' inability to democratize or inherent sectarianism; rather, they are in large part, due to the rampant insecurity and the dissolution of the Iraqi state. Finally, I discuss Iraqi articulations of "what went wrong" or why Iraq "failed to democratize." Drawing on Iraqi scholars and perspectives, I posit that post-2003 occupation policies were doomed to fail because they were unrepresentative of Iraqis, and destroyed the state, the economy, and more importantly, the fabric of Iraqi society.

4.2 Iraqi Enunciations of "Democracy"

To begin, it is important to note that there are competing definitions of *democracy*.[638] Important to this research is challenging the notion that *democracy* is a "good" that needs to be

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[638] For a history of democracy as a concept and as practice, see Isakhan and Stockwell, *The Secret History of Democracy,* 2011; Isakhan and Stockwell, *The Edinburgh Companion to the History of Democracy,* 2012; Tilly, *Democracy,* 2007; Arblaster, *Democracy,* 2002; Chatterjee, *Democracy in a Global World: Human Rights and Participation in the 21st Century,* 2008; For a minimalist, "scientific" definition of democracy, see Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* 1947; For a more "participatory" form of democracy, see Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory,* 1970; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An*

"given" or "transferred" to non-Western societies. Like other concepts such as *development,* the genealogy of *democracy* has been Anglo-Europeanized and has come to be predominantly perceived as "Western" or "European" in both origin and practice. In other words, it has come to be "owned" as an object to be transferred or given to the Other at the whim or charitability of the "owner." This particular hegemonic definition of *democracy* has become universal much like related notions of liberty, justice and freedom. Drawing on Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe,* I argue we need to provincialize this specifically Western hegemonic definition of democracy; that is, to put it back in its *particular* place and space in the Western canon of thought and practice. At the same time, postcolonial theory provides us with the tools to uncover and re-insert the history of the Other and their canon of thought and practice of democracy and other forms of governance. This is an important preface to this discussion because there is a convoluted and tumultuous attitude toward *democracy* in Iraq. On the one hand, the occupier tells Iraqis that democracy is being given to them – as if they are the "owners" of it. At the same time, Al-Qaeda and then ISIS in Iraq proclaim democracy to be un-Islamic, un-Iraqi and thus, incompatible with Iraqi society and politics. However, when I asked the research participants what democracy meant to them, they all began with the preface that what was being installed in Iraq was not a democracy. For Zyad Saeed,[639] democracy requires education, an understanding of your rights and *duties* as a citizen, free elections, stability, diversity of opinion, and open and free discussions, or what he called, "civilizational dialogue."[640] For Abbas Alwadi[641] "freedom is

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Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, 1989; For a "radical" democratic politics, see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* 1985.
[639] Born and raised in Iraq, Zyad Saeed holds a PhD in International Law and is the legal advisor for the UNDP Iraq since 2004 (first in Baghdad and in Erbil since 2007).
[640] Zyad Saeed, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[641] Born and raised in Iraq, Abbas Alwadi studied languages at the University of Baghdad until his third year when his studies were interrupted by the invasion in 2003. He worked as a journalist in Baghdad until 2013 when he fled due to threats to his life.

subjective."[642] That is, to an educated and well-travelled person, democracy will mean something different than to the average ordinary Iraqi who lived under oppression and tyranny for 35 years; to the latter, freedom and democracy first and foremost means "the phone, clothing, food, mobility."[643] Ultimately, however, freedom and democracy mean *choice*; "you choose the thing, the life you want without hurting society and those around you."[644]

The interviews conducted by Amnesty International in 2003 reveal similar sentiments, despite the absence of the concept of *democracy*. When asked if he had any proposals for the coalition, Muneer tells Amnesty,

> let Iraqi people govern themselves…Iraqi people are happy that the regime fell because they know they were not able to get rid of the regime alone – the regime had weapons, the power, Ba'ath Party was a very big gun. They know by the help of other powers they got their freedom but if they feel now that they got their freedom so that another people can occupy them and govern them and they have no power, they will not be happy. If they let them govern themselves and help them to rebuild Iraq – the Iraq that was destroyed by the regime or wars.[645]

Similar to the desire to *self-govern*, a woman interviewed from Karbala maintains,

> I hope that the US and the UK help Iraqis to form a clean government from those who have suffered under that regime [Ba'th], from those people who have sacrificed their loved ones and their lives for our nation. We do not want people who were from outside and who did not give up anything, who did not suffer, those who have lived outside the country for years and who are brought to our country to govern. We do not want them.[646]

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[642] Abbas Alwadi, interview by author. Toronto, ON, April 12, 2016.
[643] Ibid.
[644] Ibid. He linked/used the two concepts of freedom and democracy together.
[645] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Organizations], [0233], *Mu'assasat al-dhairah al-'Iraqiyah* (Iraq Memory Foundation) records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with Muneer (last name unidentified)
[646] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Organizations], [0233], *Mu'assasat al-dhairah al-'Iraqiyah* (Iraq Memory Foundation) records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with unidentified woman from Karbala.

The Iraqi aspirations to self-govern, and to form a representative government from people inside

Iraq remained unfulfilled after the invasion in 2003. The exiles – the new elite – were perceived

as "outsiders" from the beginning, undeserving of rule and power due to their "escape" of the

regime.[647]

Much of the research participants identified a lack of racism as a key ingredient to a

democratic country. For Ali Khalaf,[648] a democratic Iraq would have been one where a qualified

individual can run for office regardless of race or religious denominations, and gets elected in an

area where he/she is not a member of the majority.[649] In post-2003 Iraq, he continues, "we did

not see a Shi'a nominee being elected in a Sunni area. We did not see a Christian nominee being

elected by Arabs. When they told us there would be a democratic country, we did not see steps to

instil a democracy. In contrast, we saw steps to create racism."[650] This *sectarianization* of the

Iraqi state and politics during the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq has been echoed by many

critical scholars such as Alnasseri,[651] Ismael and Fuller,[652] and Ismael and Ismael.[653] Similarly,

Sa'ad Jawad[654] believes that the American policies in post-2003 clearly indicated the intention

was not to build a democracy: "to establish a democracy," he continued, "is to allow people to

really take part in the elections without any interference by militias and without any support from

one part against the other."[655] Specifically, Jawad maintains, "*you cannot establish democracy by*

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[647] See Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 2014; Ismael and Ismael, "The Sectarian State in Iraq and the New Political Class," 2010.

[648] Ali is a member of Yazda – a Yazidi Organization established in 2014 after the Yazidi genocide perpetrated by ISIS. They provide psychological social support for female survivors, document survivor stories, run two healthcare centers among other endeavours. Ali currently lives in Dohuk.

[649] Ali Khalaf, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.

[650] Ibid.

[651] Alnasseri, "Sectarianism and What's Going on in Iraq."

[652] Ismael and Fuller, "The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism," 2009.

[653] Ismael and Ismael, "The Sectarian State in Iraq and the New Political Class," 2010.

[654] Born and raised in Iraq, Sa'ad Jawad was a professor of Political Science at the University of Baghdad. He fled Iraq in 2009 and began a Senior Visiting Fellowship at the Middle East Centre, London School of Economics in December 2010.

[655] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.

occupation. You cannot establish democracy by imposing a constitution written or influenced by the occupying force."[656]

4.3 Iraqi Perceptions of the Invasion/Occupation

The complete dissolution of the Iraqi state and the implementation of the top-down Anglo-American nation-building model implemented were akin to "nation-destroying,"[657] which unsurprisingly failed to "democratize" Iraq. There were mixed sentiments inside and outside Iraq regarding the Anglo-American invasion. One of the most significant findings from my interviews is that almost all the research participants began their story not from the invasion in 2003, but by setting the context within which Iraqis might have perceived the invasion as a potentially positive event. That is, they began their story with the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), which had a devastating effect on both states, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (August 1990-February 1991) followed by the United States-led military assault on Iraq, no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq, and the imposition of crippling sanctions (1991-2003). It is particularly this decade of crippling sanctions that the participants emphasized in their accounts of the sentiments in Iraq prior to the invasion. This period is described by an unidentified Iraqi, whose testimony was kept anonymous for security purposes, as "below zero."[658] Moreover, "so many bad habits have developed under the effects of poverty."[659] In the months leading up to the Anglo-American invasion in 2003, Iraqis found themselves in the position of continuing to live

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[656] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[657] See Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century: Regime Change and the Making of a Failed State,* 2015; Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq,* 2014; Jawad, "Iraq from Occupation to the Risk of Disintegration," 2016.
[658] By "below zero" he means that reconstruction in 2003 was beginning on unequal ground because of the destruction of the decade of sanctions on Iraqi economics, politics and society.
[659] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0228], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with Iraqi whose testimony was kept anonymous for security reasons.

under the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, the devastating sanctions imposed on them for the actions of the dictator, and an impending invasion by the world hegemon. It is within this political, social and economic context that Iraqis explained to me their apprehensive support for the invasion. In Sa'ad Jawad's words, Iraqis "thought the Americans were going to come change Saddam Hussein, lift the sanctions, impose democracy, capture the leaders who killed their own people [Ba'ath officers who committed crimes against civilians], and create new prosperity for Iraq."[660] Describing the catastrophic effect of the Ba'ath regime and, to a greater extent, the sanctions, Zyad Saeed expressed that there was much hope for democracy and human rights through the regime change in 2003. However, he immediately acknowledges the impact of the crippling sanctions on the people's desperate decisions:

> because of the huge psychological pressure on the people [from the decade of sanctions], there was a *mist over people's eyes*. There is no occupation in the world that comes and saves you – occupation always has a specific agenda. But the *people look for any shred to hold on to save them from drowning*.[661]

This is to say, the story of foreign intervention and violence did not begin in 2003. Iraqis were suffering from a decade of a brutal sanction regime prior to 2003, which was imposed and endorsed by the most powerful global actors. Iraqis were, in fact, caught between a rock of a domestic dictator, and a hard place of global pressure through the crippling sanctions. In this context, as Saeed argues, some desperately looked to a regime change "*to save them from drowning.*"[662]

More specifically, we cannot understand Iraqi perceptions of the invasion or the occupation without a comprehension of the complex history of intervention, the conditions of

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[660] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[661] Zyad Saeed, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[662] Ibid.

Iraqis under the dictatorship, and particularly, the decade of sanctions. This is partly why most Iraqis did not actively oppose the invasion, even if they did not actively support it. For Zaid Al-Ali,[663] "the end of Saddam Hussein's regime was broadly welcomed in the vast majority of circles"; even the Sunni bourgeoisie with close alignments to the Ba'ath Party, he argues, did not actively support the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003.[664] In other words, Al-Ali's words represent how some Iraqis felt in 2003: "we are not happy about the fact that the Americans are here, we do not like the idea that they are occupying"[665] Iraq, however, because of the circumstances people were living in, he argues, Iraqis felt "this is probably the only way that we would have been able to get rid of them [Saddam's family] and it is a good thing because it has opened up all sorts of possibilities for us now; we can have something resembling normal lives – maybe not right away, but within a year or two."[666] Abbas Alwadi recalls, "I was afraid of the unknown that was coming for us – the regime used to threaten us and America used to threaten us and we were afraid of nuclear weapons – this thing we kept hearing about…this thing – WMDs – used to scare us. *I had heard about Hiroshima and the atomic bomb and I thought this was going to happen to us.*"[667] In this context, he was not opposed to the invasion: "my friends and I would say yes, the Americans are coming and this regime will be gone and we would finish our studies in America and we would have skyscrapers in Baghdad;"[668] but, he adds, "*these were flowery dreams*."[669]

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[663] Born to Iraqi parents forced into exile, Zaid Al-Ali is a lawyer specializing in comparative constitutional law and international commercial arbitration. He was a legal advisor to the to the United Nations in Iraq from 2005 to 2010 but was never based in the Green Zone.

[664] Zaid Al-Ali, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.

[665] Ibid.

[666] Ibid.

[667] Abbas Alwadi, interview with author. Toronto, ON. April 12, 2016.

[668] Ibid.

[669] Ibid.

Iraqi perceptions of the occupation, especially as time went on and Iraq descended into chaos, changed drastically. According to Zaid Al-Ali, the US very quickly began to make mistakes by "killing people unnecessarily very early on in Fallujah where the US soldiers killed around sixteen or seventeen people, the same thing happened in Mosul."[670] This inability of the US to "tread carefully, to take local circumstances into consideration"[671] resulted in many "unfortunate errors"[672] that caused "a lot of hatred on the part of Iraqis."[673] The battles in Fallujah and the general collective punishment strategies of the Anglo-American coalition in their goals to fight what they perceived as an Iraqi "insurgency" had serious consequences. Without knowledge of the language or Iraqi society, coalition forces were unable to distinguish between non-Iraqi Islamists who had entered Iraq due to the rampant insecurity and chaos, genuine Iraqi opposition or resistance to occupation, and civilians who were often caught in the crossfire. The next chapter discusses the battles in Fallujah and the radicalization of segments of Iraqi society as a result of coalition forces' indiscriminate use of force or collective punishment and detention policies.

Despite his initial support for the invasion and removal of Saddam, Adeed Dawisha,[674] reasons that after a year or so of the American invasion, "you begin to see this kind of nationalist fervor coming through; nobody likes to be occupied. And so, your liberator very quickly loses the halo of liberation once he begins to be seen as an occupier."[675] More importantly, Dawisha is unconvinced that Iraqis were "Anti-American" before the 2003 invasion; he argues, "Iraqi

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[670] Zaid Al-Ali, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[671] Ibid.
[672] Ibid.
[673] Ibid.
[674] Adeed Dawisha was born in Iraq and left Baghdad as a young adult to pursue a PhD from the London School of Economics. He has been a member of Miami University's Political Science Department since 2000. He specializes in democratic transitions and consolidation in the Middle East.
[675] Adeed Dawisha, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), February 19, 2016.

perception was shaped by American policy."[676] In other words, anti-American sentiments were

created during the first year of American occupation policies. That is, as I argued in the previous

chapter, we need to understand Iraqis' resistance to coalition forces within the context of a

foreign occupation. Identifying American policies as "incompatible" with Iraqi society, Zyad

Saeed argued, the US entered Iraq with "shock and awe," using excessive – lethal – force in

Diyalah, Fallujah, Baghdad, and Salahaddin.[677] More specifically, American military vehicles

used force seemingly authorized to kill; and this excessive use of force, Zyad added, was "far

from ambitions for human rights and democracy."[678] This assertion is echoed by Dr. Suhail who

worked with Amnesty International to document abuses by coalition forces in post-2003 Iraq,

which included violent searches, arbitrary detentions, unlawful killings, shooting demonstrations

and so on.[679] These abuses by coalition forces created resentment and fueled the opposition to the

occupation; the next chapter discusses these and the scandal at Abu Ghraib to examine the

emergence of movements such as ISIS in Iraq.

As shown below, perhaps just as damaging as "incompatible" policies and political

mistakes are the effects of extreme poverty in the new Iraq and the unprecedented high rates of

unemployment. The Hoover Institution Archives have documented over thirty interviews

conducted with Iraqi professionals, newly-freed political prisoners, women, ordinary people by

Amnesty International after 2003.[680] These interviews included concern over unemployment and

lack of income, which were largely a result of policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution

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[676] Ibid.
[677] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[678] Ibid.
[679] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Amnesty International: Iraq – healing the past, forging the future (14-08-20030], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives.
[680] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al- 'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Accessed May 2015.

of the Iraqi army and other security forces in post-2003. An unidentified Iraqi man tells Amnesty International "we want to go back to the army or police force. They [American forces] bring people who do not have experience or degrees to replace us. We want to go back to our jobs. *We are starving*."[681] As of 2014, the UNDP Iraq reported that 75 percent of Iraqis identified the need to reduce poverty as the most pressing need; 653,000 people were unemployed, placing the unemployment rate at 11 percent nationally; the youth unemployment rate was at 18 percent, which is important because 50 percent of the population is under 19 years old; while accounting for 65 percent of Iraq's GDP, the oil sector employs only 1 percent of the total labour force; 20 percent of Iraqi households use an unsafe drinking water source; 30 percent of households have access to the public sanitation network; electricity is cited as the top priority for improvement, which is higher than any other service; and 1.6 million Iraqis are affected by landmines and unexploded ordnances.[682]

From the ground, a female Iraqi writer, blogging under the pseudonym *Riverbend*,[683] wrote in 2005, "Over 65% of the Iraqi population is unemployed. The reason for this is because Bremer [Paul Bremer, the second Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq from May 2003-June 2004] made some horrible decisions. The first major decision he made was to dissolve the Iraqi army. That may make sense in Washington, but here, we were left speechless. Now there are over 400,000 trained, armed men with families that need to be fed."[684] The impact of this decision on the security situation and the rise of militant groups such as ISIS is detailed in the

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[681] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0901], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with Iraqi whose testimony was kept anonymous for security reasons.
[682] UNDP Iraq, "About Iraq," 2014.
[683] This blog gained much notoriety and was published by The Feminist Press in 2005 in two volumes titled *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq.*
[684] Riverbend, "Baghdad Burning," 2003.

next chapter. Here, I have briefly highlighted the economic impact of these policies on Iraqi society.

4.4 Anglo-American "Democratic Nation-Building:" A Top-Down Project

One of the most problematic aspects of a top-down approach to democratic nation-building is it may not be representative of society and unable to acquire the legitimacy that is necessary to govern. In the case of post-2003 Iraq, this is even more problematic as it was a system imposed by a foreign *occupying* power. That is, the process was not solidified by Iraqis themselves and they were not invested in this foreign project. In this subsection, I focus on two interrelated elements of the Anglo-American model of nation-building in Iraq: the Interim Governing Council (IGC), the policies of "de-Ba'athification" and the dissolution of the Iraqi army. Most of the critical literature and all the research participants cited this top-down approach as "undemocratic." More specifically, most of the research participants vehemently opposed the characterization of the policies during the occupation as "democratic nation-building." Instead, most agreed that the Anglo-American formula in Iraq was designed to install a "friendly" or "puppet" regime, not a democracy. Moreover, rather than "nation-building" – whether democratic or not – what happened in Iraq, according to the research participants, should be more aptly characterized as "nation-destroying." I make two interrelated arguments in this sub-section: first, the Interim Governing Council's composition was sectarian and mostly comprised of exiles who had no grassroots base in Iraq, but were chosen by the US. These elites have been mostly unrepresentative and unaccountable to Iraqis. Second, the policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the state and army had a catastrophic effect on Iraq, further entrenching sectarianism but also leaving Iraqis vulnerable to violence without a security apparatus.

4.4.1 Interim Governing Council

As discussed earlier, the invasion, occupation, nation-building policies, and the violence are all interconnected in the story of post-2003 Iraq. First and foremost, Al-Ali argues, the invasion was based on transparently false statements.[685] This is very problematic, because "it basically sends a very clear message to Iraqis and particularly to the new Iraqi political elite – the former exiles that were coming in on the back of the US invasion – that you can formulate major policy decisions and decide how to shape the state, and what direction the state is going to take based on transparent falsities."[686]

The Interim Governing Council (IGC) was established in July 2003 and was replaced by the Iraqi Interim Government in June 2004 and replaced again by the Iraqi Transitional Government in May 2005. The following year this was also replaced by the first permanent government. It may seem, then, a moot point to discuss the Interim Governing Council. However, despite the constant changing of the name of the body, the political elites comprising these bodies remain the same. Zyad Saeed notes that the Americans selected the Governing Council members randomly, not in a democratic way.[687] Moreover, from this Governing Council, "all the nation-building, politics, and democracy came from these hundred people. They have not changed from 2003 until now. They are the same people. They rotate, they change centers and seats, but they do not change."[688] Just as important to the unchanging composition of the ruling elites is the recognition that they are constrained to operate within an already-

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[685] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Zaid Al-Ali, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016. I discussed the findings of the Chilcot Report of 2016 in the previous chapter which also demonstrated that much of the evidence used to justify an invasion of Iraq was fabricated, exaggerated, or unjustified.
[686] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Zaid Al-Ali, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[687] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[688] Ibid.

entrenched sectarian logic. In a discussion regarding Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2014, Alnasseri argues,

> The problem is not the person…you can bring a different figure and maybe he or she can set something in motion…The problem is the whole state edifice, the whole institutional structure created by the United States, which permanently and systematically fractured the Iraqi polity according to ethnic and sectarian lines. So even if politicians do not want to be sectarian, they have to be in order to be elected.[689]

This sectarianization of Iraq is not welcomed by all segments of the Iraqi population. Despite, regular and national elections in post-2003 Iraq, the protest movements in 2015 and 2016 tell us that Iraq's post-2003 order has "led to unprecedented levels of popular discontent"[690] due to the "entrenchment of a self-interested, corrupt, 'partyocracy' that has captured the state and deepened sectarian divisions."[691] I discuss these protests and the government's failure to respond to them in the next chapter but here I am highlighting that even though the leaders of the parties have changed, these parties were led initially by Iraqi exiles and have left a legacy of corruption and sectarianism.

As previously highlighted, the American nation-building model was predominantly reliant on Iraqi exiles without massive popular support. When asked to what extent was this process representative or reflective of Iraqis, all the research participants responded with "not at all." Alkadiri and Toensing affirm this assertion: they argue, "the IGC certainly cannot be called a democratically constituted body…the council's 25 members were selected through negotiations between the so-called Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and a limited number of Iraqi political groups and personalities whom the US *chose* to recognize."[692] As for the criteria used

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[689] Alnasseri, "US Imperialism in Iraq."
[690] Boduszynski, "Iraq's Year of Rage," 111.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Alkadiri and Toensing, "The Iraqi Governing Council's Sectarian Hue," 2003. Emphasis added.

to choose their allies and form the IGC, the US and UK essentially considered some parties because "it was thought they had a broad social base in Iraq or because they enjoyed the support of other nations that had an interest in the country."[693] Other parties, Al-Ali writes, while did not have much support both within or outside of Iraq, were identified as allies because "their ideologies were deemed compatible or because they were considered pliant."[694] While the Council had 25 members, Bremer arguably gave "overwhelming primacy to the views of the main pre-war opposition parties and their allies, the so-called 'Group of Seven,' most of whom were outside Saddam-controlled Iraq."[695]

The undemocratic nature of *selecting* a Governing Council (interim or not) was not lost on Iraqis or political analysts – even pro-interventionists such as Larry Diamond. Citing the lack of legitimacy as a serious issue for the Coalition Provisional Authority, to which Diamond acted as senior advisor from January to April 2004, Diamond argues that Washington should have "put legitimate Iraqi leaders in visible, meaningful governance roles as soon as possible" by holding elections.[696] Indeed, one of the most famous instances of Iraqis demanding elections was the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani,[697] "Iraq's most respected Shi'ite cleric."[698] Al-Sistani issued a statement on June 25, 2003 declaring that the "forces occupying Iraq have no right to name the members of any constitution-drafting body;"[699] such a body must be chosen

[693] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 40.
[694] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 40.
[695] Alkadiri and Toensing, "The Iraqi Governing Council's Sectarian Hue," 2003.
[696] Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," 44.
[697] Al-Sistani is a Shi'a cleric who subscribes to a Shi'a "Quietist" tradition. He rose to prominence in post-2003 Iraq in part by challenging the US regarding appointing members to the IGC and calling for direct elections. On August 26, 2004, he negotiated a cease-fire between the Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia and US and Iraqi forces. See Rahimi, "Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the Democratization of Post-Saddam Iraq," 2004; Al-Rahim, "The New Iraq: The Sistani Factor," 2005; McCarthy, "Iraqi Protestors Demand Election as Ayatollah Threatens Fatwa," 2004; Sily, "Vote Confirms al-Sistani's Stature as the Most Powerful Man in Iraq," 2005.
[698] Al-Rahim, "The Sistani Factor," 50.
[699] Ibid.

"democratically" and through "direct elections by the Iraqi people."[700] Nonetheless, the IGC was appointed by the CPA in July of 2003. I will discuss briefly the most prominent members to provide context for Iraqi perceptions of this body.

Within the Shi'a opposition groups, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) is one of the "more significant" groups established during the exile period.[701] Founded in Tehran in 1982 by Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, SCIRI aimed to "rally Iraqi Shi'a Islamists to the cause of a post-Baathist, religiously inspired Iraq."[702] Its paramilitary arm, the Badr Brigade, was trained and financed by Iran to fight with Iranian troops during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).[703] For Al-Ali, this proved to be a point of contention in Iraq as many had not forgotten this but it was their "excessively sectarian" policies which prove d to be unpopular and the Party lost heavily in the 2009 local elections as well as the 2010 Parliamentary elections.[704] However, in early 2003 and before its "real electoral weight could be gauged," SCIRI's members were allowed to "heavily influence the new state's trajectory, not least by taking on leadership of the Committee that was responsible for drafting the Constitution."[705]

The other significant group within the Shi'a opposition is the Shiite Islamic Da'wa Party, which had some claim to legitimacy because they had been active in Iraq for a period before they were exiled. It was formed within the context of the "freedom of action given to, and support received by, the Iraqi Communist Party following the rise to power of Abd al-Karim Qasim in 1958."[706] In its early years, it was dominated by Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr and a group of like-minded young *'ulema*, and sought to "redress the declining place of Islam within Iraqi

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[700] Ibid., 52.
[701] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the 21st Century,* 84.
[702] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 40.
[703] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the 21st Century,* 84.
[704] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 41.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 944.

society."[707] During the Ba'ath period, its leadership was pursued, imprisoned, murdered and

exiled to neighbouring countries.[708] Despite this, the Party maintained a presence in Iraq through

secret cells, which has "given it a pre-existing support base and organization infrastructure it can

build upon."[709] In 2005, Ibrahim al-Jaafari was chosen as Prime Minister of Iraq, breaking the

stalemate, which was a result of the major Parties' refusal to allow their rivals to hold the

position.[710] Al-Ali contends, for the same reason, al-Jaafari was followed by Nouri al-Maliki in

2006, whose role in post-2003 Iraq will be further discussed in the next chapter on regional

politics and the rise of ISIS.

Two other key parties which could claim pre-existing popular support in Iraq and were

perceived as strong allies by the US and UK were the two main Kurdish parties: the Kurdistan

Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP was established

in 1946 and elected Mulla Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979) as its first president.[711] Within the KDP,

there were debates and feuds related to goals and programs: "the nascent intra-Kurdish split was

set between the more conservative and traditional, tribal wing of the KDP associated with

Barzani, and the intellectual Marxist wing led by [Ibrahim] Ahmad, and increasingly by his son-

in-law, Jalal Talabani."[712] The conflict between these two factions was intensified in 1964 when

Barzani unilaterally signed a cease-fire accord with Baghdad; this rivalry would continue into the

late 1960s when the Ba'athists made a deal with Talabani in 1968, allowing him to control the

Sulaymaniyya-Kirkuk region.[713] This is important as it shows negotiations and interactions

between the Kurds – and their rivaling factions – and the Iraqi state, which challenges the

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[707] Ibid., 945.
[708] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 43.
[709] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 950.
[710] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 43.
[711] Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq," 226.
[712] Ibid., 227.
[713] Ibid., 228.

conventional narrative of the Kurds as being entirely left out of Iraqi politics. This also

challenges the idea that ethno-religious groups in Iraq are homogenous "blocs." The 1974

Kurdish revolt against the Iraqi government occurred within the context of "border disputes"

between Iran and Iraq; once these were settled under the Algiers Accord, the Kurdish revolt

crumbled without the support of the United States and Iran.[714] Following this rebellion, the PUK

was established in 1975 in Syria led by Talabani, among others. These two parties entered an

equal power-sharing agreement in 1992 when the Kurdistan National Assembly and Kurdistan

Regional Government (KRG) were created.[715] This means by the time of the Anglo-American

invasion and occupation, these two parties had a social base in the north. However, this does not

necessarily mean they always represented their constituents' interests.

Two groups who were considered as US allies but had no grassroots or popular base in

Iraq before 2003 were the Iraqi National Accord (Wifaq) who were led by Iyad Allawi and the

Iraqi National Congress (INC).[716] Wifaq was founded in London in the early 1990s as a "secular,

nationalist grouping of exiled former Baathists, dissident military officers and professionals."[717]

Important for this discussion is the significant material support Allawi received from the US and

Gulf countries in the 1990s as he went on to become one of the "US's privileged partners when

the 2003 war broke out."[718] Allawi would serve as Iraq's first interim Prime Minister (2014-

2015). Similarly, the Iraqi National Congress was led by Ahmed al-Chalabi who enjoyed a

"close relationship with US and UK policymakers in the 1990s."[719] Despite "significant support"

from abroad, Chalabi would never win a seat in Parliament in his own right. During its period in

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[714] O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History, Future Prospects," 26.
[715] Ibid., 19. This region was created after the north of Iraq was established as a "no fly-zone" following the 1991 Kurdish uprising against the Saddam Hussein regime. This created the basis for Kurdish self-rule in the region.
[716] Ibid.
[717] Ibid.
[718] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 43.
[719] Ibid.

exile, the INC operated on liberal and secular positions, which it would shift to a more explicitly

Shi'a Islamist platform as its influence continued to wane after 2003.[720]

While an exhaustive list and summary of all the political parties in post-2003 Iraq is

beyond the scope of this study, the brief introduction I have provided demonstrates that the most

influential exiles composing the Council and the subsequent governing bodies were not

representative of Iraqis at all, except for a few. More precisely, "the only group outside of the

KRG that significantly claimed populist support or had a popular base of support was the

Sadrists."[721] The Sadrists are led by Muqtada al-Sadr whose father Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr

was a prominent "hard-liner" Shi'a cleric and oppositional figure in Iraqi politics during the

1990s.[722] Their focus on the "needs of the millions of disenfranchised poor"[723] make the Sadrists

a populist force that can claim genuine mass support. Despite al-Sadr's and his Mahdi Army's

anti-coalition operations, his "genealogy and impassioned rhetoric make him a significant figure,

and his message of defiance is attractive to many economically disadvantaged Shi'a and to those

who are opposed to their country's occupation by a foreign power."[724]

While the Sadrists refused to come to the negotiation table and refused to participate in

government, some of the other figures "had been chosen specifically because they were corrupt.

The Americans knew that they were corrupt. They also knew that these people had no skills. But

these were America's closest allies."[725] Al-Ali further notes, "how on earth could that be

representative of Iraqi desires if they were chosen by foreign powers?"[726] Referring to Iraqis'

capacities to navigate through governing options in 2003, Al-Ali acquiesces that "you can make

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[720] Ibid.
[721] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[722] Cole, "The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'thist Iraq," 2003.
[723] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 44.
[724] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 951.
[725] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[726] Ibid.

a powerful argument that Iraqis did not have their own ideas back then…but it does not mean

that you have to impose such an incompetent and corrupt group of people at the helm of the

country."[727] More specifically, he adds,

> there could have been very strong interim arrangements very
> early on to allow for Iraqis to be governed relatively competently
> by people who are not extremely morally corrupt. And during the
> interim period, to *organize a series of national dialogues* so that
> Iraqis can have an informed debate on the options that exist for
> their future.[728]

Identifying the exiles as a "gang of thieves (*shilla mal haramiya),*" Abbas Alwadi argues, "they

did not contribute anything to this country because they were exiles outside of Iraq and they

came and became the government and they are still exiles – with their privileges and protection

[militias] and everything provided to them."[729] He laments, "the only losers were the nation

(*Sha'ab)* or the citizen (*m'watin)* who spent his whole life hoping for good and unfortunately

never got to see this 'good.'"[730]

The least critical of the American invasion, Dawisha similarly states that even when the

US transferred power to the Iraqis, "the Iraqi Governing Councils were obviously under the

thumb of the Americans."[731] The biggest problem with the American intervention from the very

beginning, according to Dawisha, was that the plan and policies were conducted by the

Department of Defence and the Pentagon, not by the State Department and other civil

institutions. Moreover, the Americans should have been protecting the existing Iraqi institutions

rather than wasting a year to re-build the ministries that were ransacked such as the Ministry of

Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Research Library or the Iraqi Museum. This

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[727] Ibid.
[728] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[729] Abbas Alwadi, interview with author. Toronto, ON, April 12, 2016.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Adeed Dawisha, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), February 19, 2016.

is echoed by pro-interventionist Larry Diamond, who served as senior policy advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad during the first three months of 2004. He recounts the first weeks of the coalition's *engagement* (occupation) in Iraq as "chaotic and ineffectual, as most of the infrastructure of the country was systematically looted, sabotaged, and destroyed while American troops stood by."[732] In short, the occupying forces failed to meet the first and most basic goal after conflict, which is the restoration of order.[733]

For Dawisha, a more effective model would have entailed the civilians, the State Department in *partnership* with Iraqi experts already present to rebuild the country.[734] Linking this lack of inclusive model with the policy of de-Ba'athification, Dawisha argues, "another mistake was to ban the Ba'ath Party and get rid of all the Ba'athists not realizing that 90 percent of the Ba'ath Party were not Ba'athists. But these were your doctors, your engineers, your physicists, your chemists, your professors, your journalists."[735] That is, the Iraqi state possessed the human capabilities for re-building. Moreover, with appropriate measures such as those suggested by Al-Ali, Iraqis could have formed a functioning and more importantly, representative and inclusive government. This would have ensured that Iraqis felt invested in the future of Iraq rather than feeling disillusioned and alienated from their government.[736]

According to Yanar Mohammed,[737] from the beginning of the occupation, the US perceived a particular version of Islamism as a major ingredient of their political formula, stating "we all know that the UK and the US have a long history in our region of preferring the religious

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[732] Diamond, "Lessons from Iraq," 10.
[733] Ibid.
[734] Adeed Dawisha, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), February 19, 2016.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Interviews with Iraqi research participants.
[737] Co-Founder and President of OWFI. Born and raised in Baghdad, Yanar currently resides in Ontario due to the security challenges in Iraq, especially regarding the nature of her work. She continues to frequently travel to Iraq. OWFI is a cross-sectarian organization, originally founded by women from different parts of Iraq (Baghdad, the south, the KRG) to provide shelter for women escaping "honour killings."

so-called leaderships because they can manipulate and they know that they can depend on their influence on the simple-minded people."[738] Moreover, in order to be part of the Iraqi Governing Council, each member had to identify with a sect; "this is the formula that the US and UK put on the ground, seemingly giving 'everybody' a chance to govern."[739] While the US and the UK called this process "democratic nation-building," Yanar Mohammed along with most critical scholars and all of the Iraqi research participants in this study, identified this as *sectarianism* or "identity politics."[740] In other words, the US did not perceive Iraqi society as one diverse state comprised of multiple socio-political and cultural tendencies, and capable of internal debate and dialogue. "Iraq has a very rich political history of the 20th century;" Yanar Mohammed reminds us, "Many people were in opposition and many people had very well-defined political positions."[741] However, the US and the UK disregarded much of this reality on the ground, in favour of identity politics. For example, she states, in the Anglo-American model of nation-building, one *masihi* (Christian) would represent all the *masihi* population, regardless of the left, the right, the centre or the many interest groups within the *masihiyeen* (Christians).[742] This had very dangerous consequences for the political arena in Iraq, as it shut down all kinds of *political* debate and "brought forward the religious debate, the ethnic cleansing violence, all of which were a formula for disaster."[743] In other words, this formula imposed by the Anglo-American occupation thickened the ties of the individual with their religious or ethnic group, resulting in the establishment or growth of religious or ethnic political parties competing for power.[744] This

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[738] Yanar Mohammed, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[739] Yanar Mohammed, interview by author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[740] Ibid.
[741] Ibid.
[742] Ibid.
[743] Ibid.
[744] Ibid.

question of identity politics and the politicization of ethnicity and religion[745] of the Iraqi political arena is very important. Many of the research participants, especially the minorities, attested to the novelty of this phenomenon in Iraqi politics but also identified it as the cause of much of the racial violence seen in post-2003 Iraq. Jawad argues that the 25 members of the Governing Council were chosen based on their sect, ethnic background and loyalty to the US, making this the "first time in the history of Iraq that appointments were made on sectarian and ethnic bases."[746] Drawing on critical Iraqi scholars, the second chapter problematized the imposition or manufacturing of "sectarianism" in post-2003 Iraq and challenged the conventional narrative that Iraq was inherently sectarian. However, the misperception by American policymakers that Iraq was a fragmented or divided society underpinned their sectarian policies during the occupation, which is what Yanar Mohammed problematized in her interview.

The *sectarianization* of Iraqi society is a key element to understanding the problems inherent to the Anglo-American project of nation-building in Iraq. Sa'ad Jawad argues, "in order to establish a democracy, you have to preserve the state to start with. Do not segregate the state by causing political or racial division. Do not establish the state according to the quota system."[747] Jawad recalls the Anglo-American formula of "establishing democracy" through perpetuating this narrative of the Shiites and the Kurds as *mathloomeen min Saddam Hussein* (oppressed under Saddam Hussein) so they (more accurately, exiles from these communities) should be the only ones in power and everyone else was a "stooge of Saddam" and must be excluded.[748] To be "oppressed" by the old regime, as will be discussed later, was the most

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[745] While a Muslim-majority state, Iraq has a well-documented secular political history. This history is rich with diversity. I am not suggesting this history is peaceful but pointing to the emergence of sectarianism in Iraqi politics, which has led to ethnic cleansing, and mass violence on a scale never seen before in Iraq's modern history.
[746] Jawad, "The Iraqi Constitution: Structural Flaws and Political Implications," 8.
[747] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[748] Ibid.

effective way in which to receive American political support and to avoid suspicion of being a member of the Ba'ath Party. For much of the research participants, this quota system was very beneficial to the exile community, but very harmful to Iraqi society as a whole. Similarly, Zyad Saeed argues, the active political parties in post-2003 Iraq were all composed of exiles who did not have a very strong public base. Hence, they began to mobilize the masses or members of their community through sectarian sentiments.[749] In this way, Iraq had fallen into the *politicization* of these sectarian identities through the Anglo-American invasion and post-invasion nation-building policies. More specifically, it is worth repeating that sectarianism is not inherent to Iraqi society. But I also acknowledge that through rhetoric and policies, sectarianism has a real material effect after a decade. In other words, one cannot make the argument today that Iraqi society is not fragmented along sectarian and racial lines. This violent fragmentation, however, is a child of a deeper structural violence born out of the invasion, occupation, and post-occupation nation-building policies.

Members of the minority community had similar perceptions of the IGC. Interestingly, the issues plaguing the Iraqi state seem to play out in the minority communities as well. For example, the *politicization* of sectarian identities characterizes the national arena but also manifests itself within these small communities, serving to further fragment and weaken their political, social and economic position. Ali Khalaf argues that "the politicians, mostly from outside of Iraq, controlled everything."[750] Similarly, the Yazidi "leaders" are from outside of the Yazidi community, who imposed occupation policies on tribal leaders of the Yazidi community after the 2003 invasion.[751] In describing the *sectarianization* of his community, Khalaf argues,

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[749] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[750] Ali Khalaf, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.
[751] Ibid.

"these Yazidi leaders control the Yazidi community and those leaders are controlled by political parties – some of them with the central government of Iraq, some of them with the KDP, some of them with the PUK. So, this led to the division of the Yazidi community."[752] When asked about the extent of the Yazidi community's involvement in the building of the new government or institutions in Iraq, Ali Khalaf responded, "the Yazidis did not represent themselves"[753] and worse, as a result of the fragmentation policies the community has experienced, their voice is "not clear."[754]

The sectarianization of the Assyrian community based on religious denomination has also not only resulted in their fragmentation, but like its effect on the Yazidi community and Iraq as a whole, has produced real material effects wherein people identify with their sect. Savina Dawood[755] echoes Ali Khalaf's story: recalling the formation of the new government, Dawood posits that the Assyrians, the Indigenous people of Iraq, were not included in the political equation that the Americans formed for Iraq.[756] Due to their status as minorities, Dawood argues, the Americans "did not even care for us; they only considered those from the majority for positions of power and those whose interests served the US's best interests."[757] This echoes the conventional literature discussed in the first chapter such as federalism, power-sharing and conflict resolution, which primarily focused on the three major "blocs" and mostly ignored the rest. More problematically, this formula of inclusion based on ethnic or religious sect underlined by the Orientalist idea that Iraqi society is inherently fragmented is evidently *not* inclusive but

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[752] Ibid.
[753] Ali Khalaf, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Savina Dawood was born and raised in Iraq and is currently pursuing her MA in Human Rights and Political Science in Germany, which is the first time she resided outside of Iraq. She belongs to many different organizations within the Assyrian community.
[756] Savina Dawood, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 5, 2016.
[757] Ibid.

serves to create and entrench the fragmentation of the Iraqi state. Within this political formula, Iraqis are not citizens of an entity called Iraq, they are categorized by race or sect. Dawood also makes a significant distinction between sharing the decision-making power and mere inclusion in the political formula. When the Assyrians were consulted or merely included in the political process, she argues, "it was not powerful or supportive enough" to produce a meaningful result.[758] Dawood argues, "we are not to follow the Kurds, we are not follow the Arabs, we are to share power with them because this is our land. We are the indigenous people even though we are a minority. We are a minority because we have been persecuted and we have gone through multiple genocides."[759] Here, Dawood is problematizing the taken for granted understanding that Iraq is a Muslim or Arab state because most of its population belong to those two groups. Chapter two discussed the importance of considering the process by which the Assyrian minority became a minority in Iraq, their traditional homeland. Ignoring this process glosses over the history of this community and denies their belonging to a Muslim or Arab Iraq because they are neither. Dawood is not advocating secession from Iraq because Assyrians are not Muslim or Arab;[760] rather, she is demanding that Assyrians be included as *Iraqi* citizens and recognized as indigenous.

4.4.2 Dissolution of the Iraqi State: Policies of De-Ba'athification and the Disbanding of the Iraqi Army

There is no question that the policy of regime change in Iraq involved the complete dissolution of the state, which produced disastrous consequences. According to Zyad Saeed, the

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[758] Savina Dawood, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 5, 2016.
[759] Ibid.
[760] When I asked her whether the Assyrian community has aspirations for independence, Dawood tells me no because the majority of Assyrians in Iraq see themselves as Iraqi or as belonging to that land regardless of what it is called or who is in power.

"negative impacts" of the regime change were "greater than the positive impacts on Iraq. It changed the political system but caused overwhelming chaos in Iraq."[761] The Anglo-American invasion "did not just change the system; no, it dissolved the state, all of its parts."[762]

Following the 2003 invasion, the State Administration Law in Iraq issued a number of policies, of which two remain with the widest reaching effects on Iraqi politics and society: de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army and security forces. I outline in greater detail the impacts of the occupation policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the national army, especially in terms of the security crisis in post-2003 Iraq and the emergence of ISIS in the next chapter. In this subsection, I focus on the political and social impact of these policies. While it was seemingly unknown by the US administration, critical scholars and the Iraqi research participants held the following contention to be true: the majority of the membership of the Ba'ath Party were average citizens, forced into membership under duress, or for economic reasons. The state under the Ba'ath regime was the largest employer and promoted those who were Ba'athists. Sa'ad Jawad argues, hence, "a lot of people joined the Ba'ath Party and became deans or heads of departments or ambassadors. This was the criteria at the time."[763] Similarly, an anonymous Iraqi argues state-employed Ba'athists were "people who have spent their lives working in government departments. But the majority of them are ordinary people who have not committed crimes."[764] This policy of de-Ba'athification is also interlinked with *sectarianism.* First, due to this perception that the entire membership of the Ba'ath Party was legitimate and the interrelated perception that the Sunnis have always been the beneficiaries of the Iraqi state, "the

[761] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[762] Ibid.
[763] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[764] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0228], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with Iraqi whose testimony was kept anonymous for security reasons.

Sunnis, in general, were looked at as Ba'athists and supporters of Saddam Hussein."[765]

Professionals, employed individuals were regarded as Ba'athists and in turn, ousted from their

jobs and positions. Zaid Al-Ali argues while "there is no question that the vast majority of

ministers in government were Sunnis…, it is also fair to say that there are different categories of

Sunni."[766] That is, if you were from Al-Awja, which is Saddam Hussein's family, then you were

really privileged.[767] However, both Mosul and Anbar, predominantly Sunni-majority areas, were

not very well represented in government because they were perceived as rivals or threats to the

regime.[768] But the perception that the Sunni population were supporters of Saddam Hussein and

the beneficiaries of the Iraqi state was the predominant narrative after 2003 and contributed to

the de-Ba'athification policy. This Official account made de-Ba'athification synonymous with

de-Sunnification in post-2003 Iraq. Hence, the Sunni community revolted against the entire

political process because the Sunnis felt the political system was not representative or reflective

of their community.[769] This feeling of exclusion would later manifest itself in deeper cleavages

and in the rise of militant violent groups, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Moreover, this *de-Sunnification* led to targeted assassinations and violence; "when one of

these professionals or academics was assassinated, the perpetrators accused them of being a

'Ba'athist'."[770] Jawad adds, "more than 400 assassinations of the academics were carried out

under the American occupation, and under sectarian governments, and not a single crime was

investigated, and nobody told us who committed these or other crimes."[771] This loss in human

capacity and technical expertise can also be related to the unrepresentative nature of the US

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[765] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[766] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[767] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[768] Ibid.
[769] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype). March 14, 2016.
[770] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[771] Ibid.

nation-building model. Excluding the Iraqi experts, under the guise of de-Ba'athification, from the re-building of Iraq was a huge detriment to the success of nation-building. Dawisha argues, had the Ba'athists "been used in partnership with American civilians to create or rebuild these institutions – whatever institutions they were, and whatever government they were in – we might have arrived at results that were palpable enough for Iraqis to think this thing is working."[772] Some of these results Dawisha is referring to are basic services, the absence of which caused even more resentment among Iraqis. When asked, what is the most important thing for the coalition forces to consider when rebuilding Iraq, Majd al-Kammari, responded,

> there is no electricity and that is frustrating for the people. They [occupation forces] need to get Baghdad decent water and decent security; then people can start to think properly. Because now they are thinking about electricity and water. Their mind is occupied with irrelevant things in comparison to people living in the West or anywhere else in the world.[773]

Partnerships with Iraqi experts and others would have also led to the representation of Iraqis into the state-building process, which would have fostered a feeling of connectedness to, and inclusion in the new Iraq. Zyad Saeed recalls the implications of de-Ba'athification: "they sent a lot of people home. Those people, some of them were intermediate cadres, some of them general managers, university professors, doctors, and judges. All of them were sent home. Iraq became an empty arena completely stripped of competencies."[774] Iraqis working together would have also mitigated the politicization of sect and/or ethno-religious identity, which characterized post-2003 Iraq. This was discussed at length in the second chapter; however, the detrimental effects of the institutionalization of "sectarianism" in Iraqi politics cannot be overlooked. The

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[772] Adeed Dawisha, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), February 19, 2016.
[773] [Video Documents from Post2003] (Electronic Record), [Iraqi testimonies], [0228], *Mu'assasat al-dhakirah al-'Iraqiyah* [Iraq Memory Foundation] records, Hoover Institution Archives. Interview with Majd al-Kammari, Baghdad.
[774] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.

politicization of ethno-religious identity manifested itself not only in the political arena, or in the violence but also underlined the implementation of other policies such as de-Ba'athification.

Likewise, the dissolution of the Iraqi army was a policy with disastrous consequences. All the research participants identified this policy as having the most dangerous implications as it resulted in the unemployment of millions of Iraqis who were highly trained and skilled in warfare and violence. Moreover, as critical scholars have argued, the security vacuum left in Iraq allowed for the growth of militant groups such as al Qaeda-Iraq and later ISIS, but also created an atmosphere of absolute chaos, making it impossible for Americans or civilians to rebuild the country. Leaving aside the issue of sectarian competition or hostility, Zaid Al-Ali argues, after 2003, "it was mainly the absence of the rule of law and the absence of security institutions that was the main contributor to violence. People just assumed that there would be no repercussions."[775] Due to the high rate of unemployment, committing crime became "a good way to make a living, to earn some money, and that was the main cause for it [violence]."[776] Furthermore, in a large number of cases the perpetrators of these crimes, mainly militias that entered into Iraq after the invasion and accompanying the exiles, were engaging in this activity for "purely criminal reasons, for financial reasons."[777]

The dissolution of the Iraqi army was also underpinned by the already problematized idea of sectarianism – that Iraqi society was comprised of groups who were incapable of coexisting. Al-Ali writes that the decision to dissolve the Iraqi army was justified in "pure ethno-sectarian" terms by Bremer in his memoirs because he assessed that "the previous army had been dominated by Sunni Arabs,"[778] which means that "Shi'a soldiers would never willingly follow

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[775] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[776] Ibid.
[777] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[778] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 70.

their orders."[779] However, Al-Ali argues, "under the circumstances, it would have been safe to assume that many former soldiers would have welcomed the opportunity to resume service, if only because that would have meant a regular income."[780] Aside from the fact that there was a difference between the Special Republican Guard, Saddam Hussein's loyal units and the rest of the army, Al-Ali problematizes the CPA's assumption that Iraq's entire officer class was Sunni. He argues, there "was no evidence to support this view, because that level of detail on sectarian affiliation was simply not available."[781] Moreover, the CPA relied exclusively on the information from former exiles, which was wrong: "very many of the top officers in Iraq's new army were officers in the old army, and since there is now greater transparency on issues of sect and race, we know that the majority of those officers were actually Shi'a."[782]

4.5 What Went Wrong? Iraqi Articulations of the Story

Having discussed Iraqi articulations of democracy, this section focuses on Iraqi perceptions of the key elements of the conventional narrative regarding Iraqi society. Specifically, I am interested in Iraqi perceptions of sectarian relations before and after 2003, and Iraqis' perceptions of the violence that engulfed their country after the invasion. Finally, I asked the research participants why they felt Iraq did not democratize after more than a decade of nation-building. For this work, Iraqi articulations of this story provide a powerful counter-narrative of not only what happened in post-2003 Iraq, but more importantly, the beginnings of an answer to the question of why Iraq did not democratize. I acknowledge that for a more complete response to this question and more comprehensive inclusion of Iraqi articulations, we

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[779] Ibid.
[780] Ibid.
[781] Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future,* 71.
[782] Ibid.

need to conduct ethnographic research. However, for this project, due to the security situation in post-2003 Iraq, this type of research was impossible. That being said, the semi-structured interviews conducted along with access to primary documents such as Arabic newspapers and blogs were extremely helpful in constructing this partial counter-narrative.

4.5.1 Sectarianization: Before and After 2003 and the Subsequent Violence

All the research participants I interviewed acknowledged the existence of sectarian tensions in different periods of Iraq's modern history.[783] However, they all maintained that there is a fundamental difference between traditional tensions among the ethno-religious sects and what has happened in post-2003 Iraq. The latter is characterized by the *institutionalization* of "sectarianism," or *sectarianization* and was directly caused by the Anglo-American invasion/occupation and the exiles they put in power in the post-invasion period. Abbas Alwadi contends, "the notion of sectarianism or the concept of partisanship or factionalism, these things were present in society but they were aggravated by the occupation."[784] Perceiving it as a mechanism to distract Iraqi society or to incite civil war, Alwadi argues the Americans and neighbouring countries *sectarianized* Iraq. He also states that before 2003, he did not know what sectarianism was or what was "Shi'a" or "Sunni."[785] Moreover, if it was present, it was not *visible* in society, "I did not know what our neighbours were but after 2003, this terminology [Shi'a, Sunni] was introduced"[786] in the public sphere. When asked whether Saddam Hussein

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[783] This contention is well supported by Iraqi scholars, which were discussed at length in chapter 2. In this chapter, I focus on the perceptions of Iraqis interviewed.
[784] Abbas Alwadi, interview with author. Toronto, ON, April 12, 2016.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid.

favoured the Shi'a or Sunni in order to gauge the average public perception to his rule, Alwadi responded, "Saddam generally was a dictator with everyone. He did not discriminate – even to his own family he was a dictator."[787] He goes on to argue, "I was one of those people whose family members were executed for trivial reasons…He was a dictator on all without distinction for Shi'a, Sunni, Kurds, Christians or Sabaeans or Fayli Kurds and others because the most important thing to him was to maintain his power. He would govern Iraq until the end."[788]

Echoing this sentiment, Adeed Dawisha argues, "the entire ideological prism through which Iraqi people operated or expressed their political views was nationalist and was secular."[789] However, Dawisha also highlights sectarian tensions after the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s wherein Saddam Hussein began to depend on the Sunni tribes in Iraq. Fearing a loss of power, Saddam Hussein *politicized sectarian identities* during this time and "moved against the Shiites and the Kurds," which served to "cement that kind of ethno-sectarianism into the fabric of Iraqi society."[790]But, before the war with Iran, Dawisha maintains, "sectarianism was not only not important, it was denigrated"[791] in favour of an Iraqi nationalism. This perspective can be nuanced further: during times of crisis, leaders who fear a loss in power, use rhetoric intended to scapegoat a certain group in order to deflect from their own failures as leaders. Moreover, I critically analyzed the revolts in the second chapter and argued that while the north and south's suppression often took on sectarian tones, these uprisings can also be situated as an inevitable response to an oppressive authoritarian regime, which promoted an exclusive "Arab" nationalism.

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[787] Ibid.
[788] Ibid.
[789] Adeed Dawisha, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), February 19, 2016.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.

Likewise, Jawad argues while sectarian tensions existed, *sectarianism* was not an official policy of the government. More specifically, for Jawad, "this trend of dividing the country alongside sectarian beliefs is something new to the Iraqi society, which was created and imported by the Americans and of course, all the people who came with the Americans such as the [Iraqi exiles] were happy to see that because it served them."[792] After 2003, Jawad states, the Constitution, the laws, and political rhetoric were all sectarian. This means that "now, there is real division in Iraq alongside these sectarian divisions."[793] Interestingly, Zaid Al-Ali, complicates this narrative: "Iraqis like to think that they are not sectarian at all. That no one knew what each other's sects were. Maybe people had suspicions broadly but people did not know that and we were all friendly and that all these problems were introduced after 2003."[794] Calling this assertion "naïve," Al-Ali argues, "state policy was certainly sectarian. For example, Shi'a were not allowed to practice their rituals, they were not allowed to go on pilgrimages whereas there was no equivalent restriction on Sunnis."[795] This is echoed by the work of scholars such as Fanar Haddad who rejects "sectarianism" and "sectarian" lenses to study Iraq, but argues that there are various periods in Iraq's history or significant events in neighbouring states such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran of 1979, where *relations* between sects were politicized.[796] Nonetheless, Al-Ali acknowledges that the popular narrative that the Sunnis repressed the 1991 Shi'a uprising (*intifada*) is wrong. That is, "a lot of the Shi'a tribes in the South were enforcers; a lot of them were the ones exacting revenge against the uprising. The attitude that it was the Sunni doing the killing is wrong."[797]

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[792] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[793] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[794] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[795] Ibid.
[796] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq,* 2011.
[797] Zaid Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.

A nuanced understanding of sectarian relations in Iraq is pivotal to a comprehensive picture of post-2003 Iraq. As discussed in Chapter two, the occupation *politicized* sectarian identities, but did not produce sectarian sentiment in Iraq. Echoing this sentiment, Savina Dawood argues, Iraqi society was always divided in terms of competing interests between the ethnic groups but the *division was not violent*.[798] Much like other countries that are comprised of different nations, Iraq has five or six different nations but "*we are all Iraqis in citizenship*."[799] When I asked her why this division manifested into violence in post-2003, Savina responded "it is because of the [post-2003] policies and how the game was played"; she then added, "after all, we are not really different even though we have different identities and different nations, but when you come and see the Iraqi culture and the Iraqi society, you will see we are very similar. The Kurds, the Assyrians, the Arabs, we have been living together for so long."[800] Furthermore, Savina argued, "if there was fair division or power-sharing in the Iraqi government between the Shi'a, the Sunni, and the Kurds, and the Assyrians and others, then I do not think it would have led to what it is now."[801] While I do not agree that power-sharing is an effective model, I see why it can be appealing to someone who perceives the current system as unrepresentative of their community. If the Iraqi government was comprised of parties which were representative of Iraqis and were based on political platforms as opposed to sectarian identities, Iraqis can interact with the state as *citizens* and on the basis of political interests.

While much nuance can be introduced in the discussion on "sectarianism," it is important to note the vehement rejection of the division of Iraqi society along sectarian lines among Iraqis. Savina expresses that Assyrians do not have a problem with being Iraqi citizens as long as they

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[798] Savina Dawood, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 5, 2016.
[799] Ibid.
[800] Savina Dawood, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 5, 2016.
[801] Ibid.

are able to identify as Assyrians.[802] Likewise, Ali argues Yazidis are "part of Iraq. We are

Yazidis but in many points, we are like other Iraqi groups."[803] This sentiment is shared widely

across Iraqi society, even at the height of "sectarian" violence. For example, in 2005, Abdul Aziz

al Hakim, the head of security at the time, "gave a speech on August 8th in Najaf, which was

widely reported in the news at the time, saying he wants to establish a Shi'a region in the South

of the country. He argued that the Kurdistan region is relatively prosperous because they are a

region and we have been repressed for one thousand and three hundred years as Shi'a, and we

should establish a Shi'a region."[804] Zaid recounts that at the time, some in Western media and

academia focused on his speech to establish a Kurdish region or a Shi'a region. In effect, there

seemed to be no other solution for Iraqis other than to divide Iraq into three regions. On the very

same day that Abdul Aziz al Hakim gave his speech, however, the rest of the Shiite community

rejected it, even though this response was not widely reported in the West. The entirety of the

Iraqi Shi'a parties rejected his proposal and "in the 2009 elections, his Party was decimated –

they went from having 25 percent in the country to 5 percent."[805] Similarly, Zaid recalls many

conversations where he asked people in Basra "do you think that you would be better off if you

had a decentralized system of government whereby you could organize your own affairs without

total control from Baghdad, where you could decide how to invest the public moneys at your

disposal so that you could repair the canal systems, start picking up garbage and also get clean

water for yourselves?" [806] This would seem a pretty simple question, as Basra did not have these

basic services; however, arguing against their own interests, people opposed this suggestion

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[802] Ibid.
[803] Ali Khalaf, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.
[804] Zaid Al Ai, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
[805] Ibid.
[806] Ibid.

vehemently with the accusation of "you are trying to break up Iraq."[807] That is, it is ingrained in their minds that federalism or decentralization is just a politically appropriate word for partition.[808] Whether this perception among Iraqis regarding federalism is accurate or not is not important. The importance of this perception is that it challenges post-2003 conventional narratives wherein not only is Iraq divided along these sectarian lines but that partition was the desire of the people due to their sectarian nature.[809]

Zyad Saeed argues these nations or sects existed in society before 2003, but there was no mass violence. Moreover, when compared to states like the US or Canada, Iraq has four or five nations. What is the reason Iraqis cannot co-exist, he asks me; "is the defect in the [political] system or in the public?"[810] Surely, it is in the system Zyad contends; "if you created a just and valid system, you would not have this chaos."[811] Nadje Al-Ali[812] makes a similar contention in her work and argues against the predominant idea that sectarianism is inherent to Iraqi society. Al-Ali forcefully challenges the idea that there is no Iraqi nationalism because Iraq is an artificial country, and argues, "I very much think that there was a sense of Iraqi nation."[813] However, she contends, after a decade, "sectarianism" is dominant among the political class who are "extremely corrupt and violent."[814] My discussion with Yanar Mohammed further challenged these conventional narratives. There have been street protests in post-2003 Iraq but in the

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[807] Ibid.
[808] Ibid.
[809] A National Survey of Iraq was conducted by Oxford Research International in February 2004, which demonstrates Iraqis' opposition to partition the country. An overwhelming 79 percent of those surveyed voted for "one unified Iraq with central government in Baghdad" in comparison to the 3.8 percent who voted for "dividing the country into separate independent states." See Oxford Research International, "A National Survey of Iraq," 2004.
[810] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[811] Ibid.
[812] Of Iraqi and German descent, Nadje Al-Ali is a Professor of Women and Gender in the Middle East at SOAS. She has conducted extensive field work in Iraq and is linked to many Iraqi civil society organizations.
[813] Nadje Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 13, 2016.
[814] Ibid.

summer of 2015, Yanar recounts the people's deep frustrations with the government that had not been accountable to their needs. In this demonstration the people's slogan was of great significance: "*b'ism al deen bagona al haramiyah,*" which translates to "the thieves plundered us in the name of religion."[815] Interestingly, this slogan appeared in Baghdad, Basra, and Nasiriyah, which are all the major footholds or the "castles" of the ruling Shi'a Islamist parties.[816] The government attempted to appropriate these demonstrations through various means, Mohammed recalls, but "we did not allow them to do that in [Baghdad's] Tahrir Square."[817] She continues, "many of us who go to Tahrir Square are aware that the majority of the people who come there are fed up with the current political formula, the corruption, and the status quo."[818] Similarly, Nadje Al-Ali recalls, one of her former PhD students witnessed mass protests against corruption, sectarianism and against government incompetence in March 2016.[819] She then argues, "there is a spark. These are people who really just want to move beyond [the status quo] – especially the youth and women."[820] However, these protestors were ignored or suppressed by an "entrenched political elite that largely consists of older men who are corrupt, sectarian, and are fighting each other."[821] The suppression of these protests are discussed in the next chapter when I critically analyze the failures of the Iraqi government under Nouri Al-Maliki. Nadje Al-Ali's remarks, among others, support the finding of this research project that there is a wide gap between the political elite, which is now entrenched in Iraq's political system, and the Iraqi peoples' desires and *articulations*.

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[815] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[816] Ibid.
[817] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[818] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[819] Nadje Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 13, 2016.
[820] Ibid.
[821] Ibid.

4.5.2 Why did Iraq fail to Democratize after over a Decade of "Democratic Nation-Building"?

This study, as discussed in the introduction, was in part led by this research question: why did the Anglo-American project of "democratic nation-building" fail in Iraq? Consequently, it was important to ask my research participants the same question. Their answers to this question enabled me to understand an Iraqi perspective and to compare their views to the existing literature. It is very important to highlight that *all but one of the participants challenged the validity of this question, arguing that the purposes of the invasion and subsequent occupation were not to democratize Iraq*. Adeed Dawisha did not challenge the validity of this question; however, he was very critical of occupation policies in very similar ways to the other participants. Perhaps his socio-political status as a former Iraqi exile during the Ba'ath period, and a current American citizen partly account for his position to support the invasion. However, the continuous chaos in Iraq as reported in the media and by his extensive connections on the ground resulted in his substantive critique of American occupation policies.[822]

Zyad Saeed constantly shared his respect and admiration for the Western states' especially America's, political and legal systems. However, he argues, "they have a particular agenda. They did not come to strengthen civil society and democracy, to build the country, or even to transform Saddam Hussein's regime, or to search for weapons of mass destruction, of which there were none."[823] He forcefully argues all imperial powers require resources; "all the empires that rise, rise on the expense of others. The empire of today is American and we are the coal."[824] This perspective is shared by the literature on resource or oil wars, which was reviewed in the first chapter. If the crime rate, terrorism, security, violence, employment, and education in

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[822] See Dawisha, "Iraq: Setbacks, Advances, Prospects," 2004; Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation,* 2009.
[823] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[824] Ibid.

Iraq are compared prior to, and after the 2003 invasion, it is clear that democracy was not the end goal.[825] While he is critical of the political system under Saddam Hussein in Iraq, he argues "the events of 2003 manufactured a system of violence – a kind of communitarian violence, foreign terrorism as well as domestic terrorism."[826] Critical scholars have pointed to the violence in post-2003 as a structural violence produced via the invasion and occupation. The emergence of militant organizations such as Al Qaeda and later ISIS in Iraq following the invasion is critically analyzed in the next chapter. Ultimately, the decisions at crucial junctures of the state-building process were taken by Americans or Iraqi exiles who were unrepresentative of Iraqis. More problematically, they reflected American interests. So, Zyad Saeed asks, "where is the democracy? Where is the nation-building? Where is the freedom of the individual? Where are the people's desires? Where are the rights of the minorities?"[827] Iraq has been emptied of its religious minorities, especially in the centre and south due to the "unjust political process;" "nobody defended" these minorities, he argues, to ensure their survival in post-2003 Iraq.[828] "Diversity is important to society" Zyad Saeed forcefully argues, "the texture of society has been destroyed in Iraq. All societies are composed of interdependent, interlinked circles; when one circle breaks, the society breaks."[829]

For Abbas Alwadi, Iraqi society was "imprisoned for 35 years and [then faced with] wars along with sectarianism, explosions and terrorism;" this society, he continues, "has lost all components necessary for life."[830] For him, as discussed previously, these ailments or impediments to democracy in Iraqi society are a product of the Anglo-American invasion and

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[825] Ibid.
[826] Ibid.
[827] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid.
[830] Abbas Alwadi, interview with author. Toronto, ON, April 12, 2016.

occupation. The harshest aspect of the war in Iraq was the war against information; Abbas

Alwadi challenges "all these people who say Iraqis do not know democracy; no," he says, "it is

the opposite. Iraqis are enlightened and informed people – even the ordinary people. But [Iraqis']

problem is they have fallen in the hands of people who have exhausted them more."[831] Yanar

Mohammed's response elaborates on this point. In her responses to my question of "what went

wrong?" she states, "*I do not think anything went wrong! It went according to the political plan*

that was prepared by the US and the UK."[832] She continues by emphasizing that Iraqis did not

have the resources or capabilities, or they were "not strong enough to stand against the political

formula of dividing people along their religions and their ethnicities."[833] It was a very disastrous

formula; the US empowered the Islamists and ensured their political success while the

progressive elements in society were silenced, or left without support to ensure their failure.[834]

For example, she asks, "why would the Yazidis have to go through massacres and 3000 women

made into sex slaves?" The answer is, she says, "the US policies empowered the most

reactionary and backward groups…They created a huge monstrous Islamist backward regime to

oppress everybody in Iraq and they left us under their foot."[835] According to Yanar Mohammed,

what went wrong for those who wanted to rebuild the Iraqi state was that they did not have the

same support from the international community in the same way the Islamists did. She

concludes, "that is what happens in an imperialist war that plans on the division of society and on

the disempowerment of the majority of the people and the disempowerment of women and

minorities."[836] Similarly, Ali Khalaf argues Iraqis in general did not want an Islamist

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[831] Ibid.
[832] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[833] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[834] Ibid.
[835] Ibid.
[836] Ibid.

government. However, "even though the Iraqis did not want a religious government, their desires did not align with the ruling powers. These ruling powers and religious leaders always distract the Iraqi nation with issues smaller than their ambitions, smaller than they deserve. They distract the Iraqi nation with racism and conflicts they created."[837]

The most explicit in his position, Sa'ad Jawad argues, "the objectives were not to establish democracy in Iraq."[838] He further elaborates, "neither the British after 1914 nor the Americans after 2003 established real democracies."[839] For Jawad, the British established a real state but it failed immediately after 1958, because it was not a real democracy – it was not homegrown and Iraqi-based. The Americans on the other hand, dissolved or destroyed the state. Specifically, there was no democracy after 2003, "these were all ghost ideas."[840] Echoing this sentiment, Savina Dawood recounts Iraqi aspirations immediately after the invasion. Specifically, people were celebrating freedom from Saddam Hussein's regime wherein the majority thought "it is going to be a democratic country where we are going to be free and where we can travel to the rest of the world and we have internet and we can be part of globalization and free economy, free market, better education, and better development."[841] Moreover, they anticipated freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of organization; "they just thought they were going to have a democratic country. This was the idea that the Americans gave Iraqis, that we are here to bring democracy to this country."[842]

4.6 Conclusion

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[837] Ali Khalaf, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.
[838] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[839] Ibid.
[840] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[841] Savina Dawood, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 5, 2016.
[842] Ibid.

This chapter sought to first, provide a counter-story to the conventional narrative of "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq and second, to shift the *loci of enunciation* from the conventional voices that had primarily told this story to Iraqis using decolonial, from "below" theoretical approaches. In order to challenge the Orientalist idea that democracy is a Western good that needs to be "given" to or "transferred" to the non-West, this chapter began with Iraqi *articulations* of democracy. These were not radically different from "Western" definitions of democracy, which I argue show that people in different societies have these values or aspire to attain these rights. For example, most of the research participants emphasized elections, stability, inclusion, choice, basic goods such as clothing, shelter and food, and self-governance. Importantly, Iraqi perceptions of the invasion and occupation tell us that the story for Iraqis did not begin with the invasion but with the decade of sanctions prior to the invasion. The disastrous impacts of this period help us to contextualize Iraqi sentiments regarding the invasion, which Iraqis were not as opposed to as the occupation. Relatedly, as the economic, political and security situation deteriorated in Iraq as the occupation wore on, Iraqis' negative sentiments towards the occupation also grew. This particularly applies to the Iraqi resistance or opposition to the occupation due to the severe impacts of the policies introduced by the Coalition Provisional Authority. The previous chapter discussed these neoliberal policies and using the UNDP Iraq's statistics, this chapter demonstrated their effects: the increase in unemployment, poverty and decrease or lack of services such as electricity, water and sanitation. I briefly problematize the occupation policy of de-Ba'athification; the next chapter will discuss this policy's ramifications extensively, especially in terms of *radicalization* and the emergence of movements such as ISIS.

The next section of the chapter focused on problematizing the top-down, unrepresentative nature of the nation-building model imposed on post-2003 Iraq. I argued that this process was largely undemocratic because of two interrelated aspects of the Anglo-American model of state-building: the unrepresentative Interim Governing Council made up largely of exiles and the policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army. I highlighted the way in which most of the research participants were opposed to the characterization of these occupation policies as "democratic nation-building" and argued that instead, these policies were designed to install a puppet regime and create a weak Iraq. This chapter briefly introduced the Parties with the most influence within the IGC in order to problematize their lack of social base or support as they were mostly composed of exiles, apart from a few. Both interrelated aspects I discussed are underpinned by the Orientalist sectarian lens with which the Americans understood Iraqi society. This is why it is important to critically examine the IGC because despite its replacement by many other "governments," it was the first step in institutionalizing and entrenching – *sectarianizing* – the Iraqi state and had reverberating effects. In other words, this legacy of the occupation has continued to hinder the prospects for stability and democracy in Iraq. Similarly, the policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army served to further sectarianize Iraqi society and politics. I demonstrated the way in which de-Ba'athification was, in many ways, perceived as synonymous with de-Sunnification because the sectarian lens of Iraqi history posits that Sunni Arabs were always the beneficiaries of the Iraqi state under the Ba'ath Party. While I problematized this narrative in chapter two, in this chapter I reaffirmed this policy's fragmentary nature, especially in terms of feelings of exclusion and resentment by the Sunni community, which deepened the fragments. The policy to dissolve the Iraqi army had similar disastrous

effects, especially in creating a security vacuum and unemployment, which increased the rate of crime.

In the final section of this chapter, I analyzed the data from the question I posed to the research participants regarding what went wrong in Iraq. This was intended to provide an Iraqi counter-story to the conventional narrative, which I problematized in previous chapters. I categorized the research participants' responses in two categories: perceptions of "sectarianism" before and after 2003 and of the violence that permeated their lives after the invasion; and why Iraq failed to democratize after more than a decade of "democratic nation-building." Some of the research participants acknowledged the existence of sectarian tensions in Iraq's history prior to the invasion and others argued that sectarianism did not exist at all. However, what they all agreed upon was the *sectarianization* of Iraq through Anglo-American occupation policies either through institutions, the governing bodies, the Constitution or de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the army. This is why most of the participants viewed the violence as a systematic, structural problem resulting from the invasion and occupation but also a direct result of the power and security vacuum created by the invasion, which allowed for groups like Al Qaeda to take hold in Iraq. Most importantly, while all the research participants viewed the ruling elites as sectarian, they were very much in opposition to the sectarianization of Iraqi politics. This tells me that there is a wide gap between the political ruling elites and Iraqi peoples' desires, which I elaborate on in the next two chapters.

In relation to the second question of why Iraq failed to democratize, all but one of the participants challenged the validity of the question, arguing that America's policies during the occupation clearly demonstrated to them that democratization was not the goal in Iraq. All of them pointed to the unrepresentative and unelected ruling elites that were put in power by the

CPA, which were largely exiles. They also pointed to the unfulfilled promises of "democracy" and "liberty" because of the reality they experienced: violence, war, unresponsive ruling elites, and terrorism at the hands of Al Qaeda and later, ISIS. For the vulnerable minorities, these problems were compounded as I previously discussed their precarious position post-2003 due to their inability to protect themselves or to rely on the Iraqi government. The previous chapters have discussed various aspects of what "went wrong" in the Anglo-American nation-building process. This chapter has focused on Iraqi perspectives garnered from semi-structured interviews of the various aspects of the answer to the question of why Iraq failed to democratize after over a decade of "democratic nation-building." I have focused on Iraqi articulations of what a democratic Iraq would have looked like in order to draw a comparison between those conceptions and the reality on the ground throughout this period (2003-2016). Moreover, it is important to note that the reality on the ground today would fail universal standards for democracy. Despite this, the predominant narrative of post-2003 Iraq and the answer to this question has typically emphasized presumed attributes of Iraqi culture – sectarianism, barbarism, backwardness – as the answer. The Iraqi perspectives provided in this chapter were intended to challenge this answer. The next chapter will shift the focus from the "domestic" to the "regional" with an emphasis on the rise of movements such as ISIS.

Chapter 5: The Regional Context – A Postcolonial Account of ISIS

> There were obviously mistakes made in how we handled in Iraq.
> In retrospect, bringing every jihadi and insurgent into the
> same place and giving them all the time in the world
> to get to know one another may go down as our
> biggest mistake.

Greg,[843] former US Officer at Camp Bucca

5.1 Introduction

One of the biggest problems in post-2003 Iraq has been containing violence from various

militias who saw an opportunity to make political and economic gains in the vacuum left in the

wake of the removal of Saddam Hussein. The most serious of these has been Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which took over Iraq's second largest city, Mosul in June 2014. The

effects of ISIS in the region have been catastrophic, especially for vulnerable minorities unable

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[843] This is the name used by Brad Parks of the *New York Post* for the officer who asked to remain anonymous due to this ongoing work with the Defense Department.

to rely on the security apparatus of the weak Iraqi state for protection, or their own sectarian militias. Sectarian militias are an increasing reality on the ground in post-2003 Iraq, which is another detrimental result of the invasion and occupation policies fragmenting the Iraqi state. ISIS has been the subject of much debate by Western media and political analysts, among whom the most problematic idea is that ISIS represents a revolutionary or counter-cultural movement that has no foreseeable end or collapse.

In contrast, this chapter argues that its emergence and successes in occupying major cities did not happen without warning. A critical analysis of the US occupation and intervention in the region, corrupt domestic policies, and regional politics are important to understand the rise of extremist violent movements such as ISIS. Fawaz Gerges writes, "it is important to place the organization within the broader global jihadist movement."[844] However, the socio-political origins of ISIS are to be found within a specific post-invasion Iraqi context and the Syrian war. More precisely, "ISIS was born of an unholy union between an Iraq-based Al Qaeda offshoot and the defeated Iraqi Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein, which has proved a lethal combination."[845] While ISIS has been the subject of much debate both in the region as well as in the West, critical scholarship has placed emphasis on the international and the regional factors in their analyses. [846] That is, foreign intervention by a perceived imperial power to impose regime change and their policies, which opened up the space for movements like ISIS is important. Regional intervention and influence are also necessary for a nuanced comprehension of the rise and politics of ISIS.

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[844] Gerges, "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism," 339.
[845] Ibid.
[846] I footnoted this in the Introduction. For a critical discussion of the emergence of ISIS, see Gerges, *ISIS: A History,* 2016; Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about Islamic State," 2015; Alnasseri, "ISIS Fills Power Vacuum in Iraq Fundamentally Created by U.S. Foreign Policy," 2014; Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014; Prashad, "The Geopolitics of the Islamic State," 2014.

Specifically, I argue that there are very real political and strategic factors, which gave rise to ISIS. They include the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, sectarian policies under occupation, corrupt and incompetent Iraqi political elites, the regional influence of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, and the Syrian civil war. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the conventional analyses and understandings of ISIS. This is followed by an alternative reading of the emergence and "success" of ISIS. Drawing on critical postcolonial theories, this chapter contextualizes political violence; I argue that political violence in Iraq should be analyzed in terms of power relations between "us" and "them." More precisely, I examine how the regional and global powers instrumentalize violence for political and economic ends. Placing ISIS within the context of the Anglo-American invasion and occupation policies, I suggest three interrelated factors that can help us understand the emergence of ISIS. Specifically, I examine the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, sectarian policies in post-2003 Iraq, and regional factors, including the Syrian war and the ideologies of Wahhabism and Salafism. It is important to highlight the role of the extremist ideology of "jihadism." The ideology of ISIS, like that of Al Qaeda, is influenced in particular by militant and ultraconservative readings of Wahhabism and Salafism.[847] However, abstract ideas are powerless by themselves and they need to be contextualized. War, occupation, and realpolitik feed extremist ideas. ISIS, as will be discussed, is not a *cultural/civilizational phenomenon.* Hence, this chapter will focus on the politics of ISIS in the larger domestic, regional and global context. Specifically, drawing on the work of many critical Middle East specialists and interviews with Iraqis on the ground, I suggest that first, ISIS and sectarian violence does not accurately reflect the desires of Iraqis and, second, to a large extent, the initial appeal of movements like Al Qaeda or ISIS can only be truly eradicated when

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[847] For a discussion on the role of ideology, see Gerges, ISIS, 2016; Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global,* 2005; Kamran, "On ISIS," 2015.

the conditions of social, economic and political marginalization and oppression that act as "breeding grounds" for such movements are eliminated.

I examine ISIS as the only regional factor which has contributed to the failure of democracy because it has had a significant impact on post-2003 Iraqi politics, society and demographics. It speaks to the catastrophic effects of the *sectarianization* of the Iraqi state, which I have discussed throughout this work. However, it is also a reflection of the severely detrimental effects of the occupation, which I discuss at length in this chapter: namely, the emergence of Al Qaeda in Iraq and the radicalization of Iraqis through policies such as de-Ba'athification, and collective punishments and detention of Iraqis as a result of the American and Iraqi ruling elites' struggle with "insurgents." Although I argue the rise of ISIS has domestic origins within a specific post-2003 Iraq context, the emergence of this group has regional and global origins as well. Accordingly, I examine ISIS within the "regional" context to demonstrate the relationship between all these factors in what happened in Iraq after the invasion and occupation.

5.2 Conventional Readings of ISIS

The emergence of ISIS in mainstream Western media corresponded with the capture of Mosul in June of 2014. Of course, this is not where the story of ISIS begins; it is arguably, just the beginning of ISIS working against American interests in the region. That is, there is some evidence of the US supporting militant Islamists – and *arguably* individuals associated with ISIS troops – in Syria during the Syrian civil war, because of a desire to remove Bashar al-Assad from power using any and all means available. However, the US sent military aid to the Iraqi regime when ISIS took over territories in Iraq. Ali Al-Jaberi writes, "targeting Al-Assad is fine, but

turning your weapons against a US ally is a different matter altogether. *It appears one man's freedom fighter can be the same man's terrorist*."[848] Since 2014, political analysts, pundits, governments, and think-tanks have all been studying the militant group and debating the causal factors of their creation and their successes. These responses can be categorized into the following camps. First, there is the well-known and previously discussed neo-Orientalist discourse depicting ISIS as typical of Islamic movements and deeply rooted within Islamic tradition and culture.[849] Essentially, this discourse is a reiteration of much of the discourse during the war on Iraq; that is, Muslims are exceptional to democracy and are fueled by centuries-old sectarian animosities which can only be resolved by violence.

Second, the rise of ISIS is attributed to the Saddam and Assad regimes. Kyle Orton, a Middle East analyst in a London-based foreign policy think tank, writes in the *New York Times*, "the Islamic State was not created by Removing Saddam Hussein's regime; it is the afterlife of that regime."[850] According to Orton, the radicalization and "Islamization" of Iraqi society under Saddam Hussein purportedly began with the war against Iran in the 1980s. There are many issues with this analysis but I highlight two for the purposes of this chapter. First, not only has Iraqi society been secular since the inception of the modern state of Iraq, but there has been no evidence found in the aftermath of the invasion to suggest an alliance between the Saddam Hussein regime and Al Qaeda, as the Bush administration vehemently claimed as a pretext to invade.[851] Second, this analysis of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) fails to consider the international

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[848] Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014. Emphasis added.
[849] Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," 2015; Chasmar, "BBC Religion Chief Aaqil Ahmed: 'Of course' ISIS is Driven by Islam," 2016; Ibrahim, "ISIS or Islam: Which Breeds Terrorism?" 2016; Muir, "Islamic State group: The Full Story," 2016; Klein, "ISIS and True Islam," 2016; Mortimer, "Justin Welby: It's Time to Stop Saying ISIS has 'Nothing to do with Islam,'" 2016.
[850] Orton, "How Saddam Hussein Gave Us ISIS," 2015.
[851] See The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004; Pincus and Milbank, "Al Qaeda-Hussein Link is Dismissed," 2004; Al-Ali, "Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women Between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation," 2005; Helfont and Brill, "Saddam's ISIS?" 2016; Chilcot Report, *Iraq Inquiry,* 2016.

context of the Cold War; there is a substantial literature speaking to the proxy wars between the superpowers, especially in the Global South, of which the Iran-Iraq war was arguably one instance.[852]

Similarly, Daniel Greenfield, a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the Freedom Center, argued, "Both regimes [Saddam Hussein's and Assad's] sowed the Islamist seeds of their own destruction and made inevitable their transformation into Islamic terror states."[853] Citing their mutual hatred towards the US – without the context of imperial foreign intervention – Greenfield attempts to show the connection between both regimes using Islamists for their own political gains. In other words, this is an ahistorical argument, which ignores how the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq destroyed a state, destabilized a nation, and created a huge vacuum to be filled by extremism. But even if Greenfield's claim can be supported, it highlights the double standard of conveniently ignoring instances of American unholy alliances with the "enemy" to serve its political and economic interests in the region. US support for the *Mujahedeen* in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union is but one example of a host of other similar examples of US support for these groups in the region at the expense of everyday people.

Another example of this type of analysis is articulated through a debate by Amatzia Baram and Samuel Helfont and Michael Brill. In their 2016 *Foreign Affairs* article, "Saddam's ISIS?: The Terrorist Group's real Origin Story," Helfont and Brill posit that Baram who wrote a book about Saddam Hussein's relationship with Islam,[854] has "since stated that Baghdadi 'is Saddam's creation.'"[855] Citing the documents in the Iraqi archives and at Hoover Institution's

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[852] See Wilson Center, "The Origins, Conduct and Impact of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988," 2011; Carpenter and Innocent, "The Iraq War and Iranian Power," 2007; Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War,* 2010; Blight et al, *Becoming Enemies: US-Iran Relations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1979-1988,* 2012.
[853] Greenfield, "The US Didn't Create ISIS – Assad and Saddam Did: Dictators Pay a Price for Allying with Islamic Terrorism," 2015.
[854] See Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam, 1968-2003: Ba'thi Iraq from Secularism to Faith,* 2014.
[855] Helfont and Brill, "Saddam's ISIS? The Terrorist Group's Real Origin Story," 2016.

Ba'ath Party records, they argue that Baram's and others' arguments that ISIS is a product of Saddam Hussein's regime are "inaccurate and dangerously misleading."[856] Specifically, they contend, "our rigorous study of those records has found no evidence that Saddam or his Ba'athist regime in Iraq displayed any sympathy for Islamism, Salafism, or Wahhabism."[857] Baram responds to these criticisms in his *Foreign Affairs* article, "Saddam's ISIS: Tracing the Roots of the Caliphate," in which he reiterates his argument: based on Saddam's "Islamic 'Faith Campaign,' which lasted from 1993-2003," Saddam was an "Islamist."[858] For Baram, it is just as important, if not more, to trace the Ba'ath regime's "operational ideology," which offers "critical evidence supporting Saddam's Islamization efforts between 1993 and 2003."[859] Despite the Ba'ath regime's "turn to religion" during the sanctions period,[860] the argument that Saddam created ISIS or Al Qaeda in Iraq fails to acknowledge the pivotal role of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The lack of socio-political historical context makes this argument very weak; as this chapter shows, the security vacuum created in Iraq, the structural violence of the occupation, and policies such as de-Ba'athification and collective punishment and detention served to radicalize elements of Iraqi society.

Still, there are some who argue that ISIS is a revolutionary state. In a *Foreign Affairs* article in late 2015, Stephen Walt writes, "its religious dimension notwithstanding, the group is just the latest in a long line of state-building revolutionaries, strikingly similar in many ways to the regimes that emerged during the French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Cambodian, and Iranian

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[856] Ibid.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Baram, "Saddam's ISIS: Tracing the Roots of the Caliphate," 2016.
[859] Baram, "Saddam's ISIS: Tracing the Roots of the Caliphate," 2016.
[860] For a discussion on the role of the sanctions regime and its devastating impacts leading to a "religious revival" in Iraq, see Ismael, S., "Dismantling the Iraqi Social Fabric: From Dictatorship Through Sanctions to Occupation," 2004; Haddad, "The Terrorists of Today are the Heroes of Tomorrow: The anti-British and anti-American insurgencies in Iraqi History," 2008.

revolutions."[861] His policy advice begins with "seeing the Islamic state for what it is: a small and under-resourced revolutionary movement too weak to pose a significant threat, except to the unfortunate people under its control."[862] Without assigning moral responsibility for unleashing ISIS on a weakened Iraqi state, Walt concludes, "the Islamic State is not an existential threat to the United States, to Middle Eastern energy supplies, to Israel, or to any other vital U.S. interest, so U.S. military forces have no business being sent into harm's way to fight it."[863] Previous chapters and the next section provide a detailed outline of the US role in the rise of ISIS. However, here I highlight the reduction of an entire region, along with its people, to "energy supplies." US administrations and policymakers alike often take their interest – energy supplies – in the region as the point of departure with a noticeably lack of consideration for the lives of everyday people who suffer from such policies.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam's scathing response to Walt shifts the *loci of enunciation*; that is, he provides an analysis, which begins with a consideration for the "suffering of people" rather than states or national interest. He writes, "the United States, both its elites and citizens, has a moral responsibility toward the people of the (so called) 'Middle East.' The vast majority of those still dying in the region are all casualties – direct and indirect – of the 'war on terror.'"[864] Adib-Moghaddam outlines US complicity in the rise of ISIS. Perhaps his most powerful critique is a reminder of the national struggles of people in the Global South. For Adib-Moghaddam, comparing ISIS to revolutionary states in Russia, Iran, Cambodia, Cuba and China overlooks the historical reality from which these movements emerged: "out of broad, popular movements supported and fought for across several strata of society including workers, peasants, students,

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[861] Walt, "ISIS as Revolutionary State: New Twist on an Old Story," 42.
[862] Ibid., 43.
[863] Ibid., 50
[864] Adib-Moghaddam, "No, Professor Walt, ISIS is Not a Revolutionary State," 2015.

rights activists, and intellectuals among others."[865] Moreover, for all their faults, writes Adib-Moghaddam, "Cuba's Fidel Castro, China's Mao Zedong, Russia's Vladimir Lenin and Iran's Ruhollah Khomeini were the point of fixation for millions of people, charismatic figure-heads of mass movements that are simply incomparable to the al-Baghdadis of this world."[866] Analyses such as this that historically contextualize social movements but more importantly, which take seriously the conditions of people on the ground, potentially open the space for politics "from below."

Finally, ISIS has also been analyzed as a movement that is strictly political and without any basis or root in religion.[867] While I sympathize with the need by some scholars to challenge the very real and rising Islamophobia across the Global North as a result of the Global War on Terror, I argue this analysis is inaccurate and simplistic. In the following section, I examine the role of the extremist tradition of Wahhabism and Salafism propagated by the political elites of Gulf states. But one cannot dismiss the perspectives of the victims of ISIS' brutal violence in the name of "God." As previously mentioned, vulnerable minorities such as Zoroastrians, Christians, Shi'a or even non-conforming Sunni Arabs are being brutalized everyday in the name of the God ISIS claims to obey. It is possible to pay attention to the suffering of those on the ground, especially on the terms they are understanding this suffering, without succumbing to the simplistic, racist and narrow Orientalist/Islamophobic discourse. Obviously, this analysis needs to be politically and economically contextualized. Nonetheless, it is important to note that without a meaningful engagement with these minorities' perspectives on their suffering, Iraqi

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[865] Ibid.
[866] Ibid.
[867] See Aziz, "What ISIS Really Is," 2017; Kumar, "ISIS is UnIslamic, Against the Quran, says Muslim Group," 2016; Ortega, "America's Most Prominent Muslim Says the Atlantic is doing PR for ISIS," 2015; Jenkins, "What the Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong about ISIS and Islam," 2015; Al Jazeera, "Tariq Ramadan: 'ISIL's Acts are Un-Islamic,'" 2014.

society cannot rebuild or reconcile. What easily amounts to acts of genocide against Assyrians, Yazidis, Shi'a and other non-conforming Muslims, ISIS wasted no time in erasing all pre-Islamic history of the areas it occupies in a gruesome and horrific manner. This includes the drawing of the letter *noon* (Arabic N) on Iraqi Christian homes in Mosul as identifying markers prior to genocide and displacement, which is not easily forgotten by the victims when they are being told it is merely their wrong religious affiliation that is the cause of this violence and dispossession.[868] The well-documented abandonment of Yazidis in Sinjar and the sex trade of Yazidi women have had a devastating and catastrophic impact on the Yazidi community as well.[869]

5.3 How, Then, Shall We Understand ISIS? The Context of Political Violence

This section provides a critical postcolonial reading of the rise and expansion of ISIS in Iraq. I argue that ISIS and other militant movements must be examined within a larger theoretical context of the use of political violence in the international system. One of the most useful tools critical postcolonial theories offer is their conceptualization of the reciprocal relationship between "us" and "them." The intention here is not to excuse the brutality of militant movements or violence but rather, to begin to understand these movements in their geo-historical context premised on neocolonial and imperial processes. Moreover, critical

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[868] See Kanso, "Symbol of ISIS Hate Becomes Rallying Cry for Christians,"2014; Assyrian International News Agency, "ISIS in Mosul Marks Christian Homes, Patriarch Issues Urgent Appeal," 2014; Sisto, "A Christian Genocide Symbolized by one Letter," 2014; Holpuch, Sherwood and Bowcott, "John Kerry: ISIS is Committing Genocide in Syria and Iraq,"2016; Westcott, "ISIS is Committing Genocide against Yazidis, Christians and Shiites: John Kerry," 2016; Kino, "Our Last Stronghold is Now Also Attacked: It's a Genocide Mr. President," 2017.
[869] See Wintour, "UN Condemns ISIS Genocide against Yazidis in Iraq and Syria," 2016; Cumming-Bruce, "ISIS Committed Genocide Against Yazidis in Syria and Iraq, UN Panel Says," 2016; UNHR Office of the High Commissioner, "UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria: ISIS is Committing Genocide against the Yazidis," 2016; Armstrong, "Yazidi Women Tell Their Horrific Stories," 2016; CBS, "UN: ISIS Genocide of Yazidis in Iraq 'Ongoing,'" 2016.

postcolonialism provides a critique of the problematic historical amnesia that underpins the Orientalist discourse of the Iraq crisis in particular, but the Global War on Terror in general.[870] In reference to ISIS, Al-Jaberi writes, "mainstream western media continue to reduce the crisis to 'Arab-looking' men wielding beards and Kalashnikovs and spreading terror in a sectarian quagmire."[871] Conveniently obscuring the undercurrents of the crisis, this Orientalist frame renders "terror and sectarian violence a 'natural' phenomenon to the Arab world, entirely detached from western involvement."[872] Al-Jaberi concludes, "while Iraqis, who are massacred by the thousands, are portrayed as sectarian fanatics, western military superpowers can plead innocent once again."[873] This is a familiar story; seemingly anti-Western sentiment among populations of the Global South is rarely contextualized and all anti-Western leaders are demonized as oppressive tyrants who hate American freedom. Specifically, President Bush told the world, in his 2001 State of the Union Address, the terrorists hate America because "they hate what we see right here in this chamber, a democratically elected government…they hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."[874] President Bush's statement fails to take into account the decades of foreign intervention, support for oppressive regimes considered to be allies, collective punishment in the form of devastating sanctions, and violence inflicted on the people of the region by hegemonic powers.

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[870] I extend this argument to the majority of instances of violence between the world hegemon and the Global South. This is in part, rooted in the belief in itself as "benign," especially in relation to its predecessors as well as the image of itself it tries to propagate on the international stage.

[871] Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014.

[872] Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014.

[873] Ibid.

[874] Agathangelou and Ling, "Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11," 522.

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Postcolonial feminist scholars Agathangelou and Ling's contention that "we intersubjectively create our worlds,"[875] is a necessary starting point of departure for understanding the context of such violence in the international system. Abu Rabi' writes, "Islamism is a bewildering, multifaceted phenomenon in the contemporary Arab world intent on challenging the post-World War II political order in the region."[876] His use of the term "Islamism" as opposed to "fundamentalism" or "political Islam" is deliberate, defining Islamism "as both a social and political movement with a clear religious worldview."[877] There are four points on Islamism that are important for Abu-Rabi'. First, he identifies the Islamist movement in the contemporary Arab world as a product of local, national and international factors. Second, Islamism is also a response to a particular social and economic context. Third, Islamism must be contextualized within an understanding of the complex relationship between state and religion in contemporary Arab-dominant societies. Finally, Islamism is not a passing phenomenon; rather, it "occupies center stage in intellectual debates about a number of significant issues and challenges facing the Arab world."[878] The strength of Abu-Rabi's analysis lies in his situating of Islamism within the international system but also the international political economy. That is, if as Abu-Rabi' argues, modern Islamism is "primarily the product of the modern capitalist system created by several Western powers over the past two centuries,"[879] it is possible to situate Islamism within the larger Global South context. As Immanuel Wallerstein writes, Islamism "is simply one variant of what has been going on everywhere in the peripheral zones of the world-system. The basic interpretation of these events has to revolve around the historic rise of anti-systemic

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[875] Ibid., 518.
[876] Abu Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Reader,* vii.
[877] Ibid., xxiii.
[878] Abu Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Reader*, viii.
[879] Ibid., ix.

movements, their seeming success and their political failure, the consequent disillusionment, and the search for alternative strategies."[880] Consequently, Islamism is driven by "the events taking place in the modern world, such as the creation of the modern world system, the emergence of imperialism, and the moral and political bankruptcy of most, if not all, of the ruling elites in the postwar Arab world."[881]

In "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?" Mahdavi provides a critique of both Western modernity and Islamism. He draws attention to the links between Orientalists and Islamists, arguing, "the Western Orientalists' argument resonates with the Islamists' perception of a fundamental clash between Islam and modern notions of democracy, secularism and human rights."[882] For Mahdavi, both classical and contemporary Orientalists such as Ernest Renan and Ernest Gellner, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington "argue that there is a fundamental irresolvable clash of values between Islam and modernity."[883] Mahdavi categorizes the Muslim response to modernity into three aspects: modernist secularism, traditional Islamism, and Post-Islamism. This third alternative approach "challenges both a hegemonic voice of a singular and superior Western modernity and an essentialist Islamist response to modernity. This is an invitation to acknowledge multiple modernities, the emerging Muslim modernities, and a gradual shift from Islamism toward post-Islamism."[884] Drawing on the work of Abu-Rabi', Mahdavi posits that Islamism is a by-product of the "undemocratic imposition of a new world order"[885] and a response to the "economic and ecological violence of neo-liberalism, the fundamentalist orthodoxies of which fuel the growing divide between rich and poor."[886] It is

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[880] Wallerstein "Islam, the West, and the World," 120.
[881] Abu-Rabi' ix
[882] Mahdavi, "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?" 58.
[883] Ibid.
[884] Ibid.
[885] Ibid., 60.
[886] Ibid.

important to understand the geo-political, colonial and imperial context which gave rise to

Islamism in the wider Middle Eastern and North Africa region. However, these movements are

not beyond critique. Mahdavi writes, the

> Islamist vision of politics and state therefore essentializes
> Muslim culture and traditions; it echoes the Orientalist
> stereotype of Islamic exceptionalism. Although different in
> power relations, both Orientalist and Islamist discourses
> advocate cultural essentialism. These particularist
> approaches undermine the possibility of a modern
> democratic Muslim society and polity.[887]

This analysis of Orientalism and Islamism is useful to open the space for critique of both

essentialist paradigms but also to open the space for alternatives to colonial modernity.

The Clash of Civilizations discourse has been instrumental in defining the international

system in the post-Cold War period, especially for the United States as it embarked on its

"Global War on Terror." However, like Mahdavi, Gilbert Achcar examines the mutually

reinforcing mechanisms of the "West" and the "Islamic world." He writes, "rather than a 'clash

of civilizations,' the battle in progress is thus definitely a clash of the barbarisms that

civilizations secrete in varying quantities in the course of the long historical and dialectical

process of Civilization."[888] More troubling, Achcar continues, is the reality that "on both sides,

'absolutely hostility' toward the 'absolute enemy,' to use Carl Schmitt's words, thus entails the

deployment of extreme violence and a logic of extermination."[889] Achcar is drawing on Guy

Debord's *The Society of Spectacle,* to describe the dehumanization process which leads to such

extermination. However, rooted in the specific context of coloniality, postcolonial scholars have

long drawn our attention to the way in which the "Other" is stripped of their humanity in order

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[887] Ibid., 62.
[888] Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarism: The Making of the New World Disorder*, 66.
[889] Ibid.

for us to conceive of and subsequently, act out such violence in our quest for the ever-elusive goal of "security."

For instance, regarding the question of "why do they hate us?" which was continuously asked in the aftermath of 9/11, the answer, Derek Gregory writes, was "to be found among 'them' not among 'us': not in the foreign policy adventures of the USA, for example, but in what was portrayed as the chronic failure of Islamic societies to come to terms with the modern."[890] Indeed, the region known as the Middle East has been home to some notable dictators, oppressive state policies, and civil rights violations. However, "many (most) of those regimes were set up or propped up by Britain, France, and the United States. And it is simply wrong to exempt America from criticism, and to represent its star-spangled banner as a universal standard whose elevation has been inevitable, ineluctable: in a word, simply 'natural'."[891] The argument is obviously not to condone the violence against the United States as retribution. Rather, I point, first, to the reciprocal relationship between "our" and "their" actions: "without in any way 'excusing' mass terrorism, one can hold the government of the United States responsible for its own actions and the hatred that they call forth."[892] Second, I purposefully define American violence as *violence*. This stems from the observation that violence of the hegemonic state is rarely defined as such, or if it is, it is usually cloaked within a cloud of moral right or national interest. This is not a new phenomenon; Mahmood Mamdani writes, "by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was a European habit to distinguish between civilized wars and colonial wars. The laws of war applied to wars among the civilized nation-states, but laws of nature were

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[890] Gregory, *The colonial Present*, 22.
[891] Gregory, *The colonial Present*, 24.
[892] Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms,* 14.

said to apply to colonial wars, and the extermination of the lower races was seen as a biological necessity."[893]

Similarly, Gregory's argument is a cursory step in recognizing the violence inflicted on ordinary people: he argues, "the war on terror is an attempt to establish a new global narrative in which the power to narrate is invested in a particular constellation of power and knowledge within the United States of America."[894] In other words, coloniality is "not produced through geopolitics and geo-economics alone, through foreign and economic policy…it is also set in motion through mundane cultural forms and cultural practices that mark other people as irredeemably 'Other' and that license the unleashing of exemplary violence against them."[895] This theoretical framework helps us to contextualize violence and how it is used as a political or economic instrument by actors in the international system. More specifically, in "Understanding Iraq," Alnasseri argues,

> Ideas like Samuel Huntington's famous 'clash of civilizations' are deployed to legitimate imperial control and rule over geo-strategically and economically important spaces in the South. The discursive construction of these spaces as dangerous, terrorist, and uncivilized areas is a necessary condition for ensuring and perpetuating such control and rule. To understand Iraq and situate the extreme violence and terror in their proper context, one must understand two specific moments: the *Guantanamo-isation* of Iraq, and the reactivation of *colonial* forms of rule and social forces under new circumstances.[896]

In short, Alnasseri concludes that rather than characterizing the violence in Iraq as fanatical or extremist, one must examine the ways in which "the occupation has created a situation which

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[893] Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*, 7.
[894] Ibid., 16.
[895] Ibid.
[896] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 78.

provides a breeding-ground for all kinds of atrocities."[897] Many critical Iraqi scholars have

shown the way in which "sectarian" rhetoric was used by the ruling elites, especially the exiles

who had no grassroots support to draw from, and relied heavily on sectarianization, to meet their

political and economic interests. I posit that the institutionalization of sectarianism, or more

accurately *sectarianization*, is perhaps the most damaging legacy of the Anglo-American

occupation; understanding the reasons for the conditions within which ISIS emerged are vital to

working towards defeating their ideology. This contention is a useful point of departure for a

postcolonial analysis of the emergence of ISIS in Iraq and the region.

5.4 ISIS: A Critical Postcolonial Analysis

Drawing on a postcolonial theoretical framework, this section focuses on three

dimensions of ISIS, which taken together, offer a more helpful analysis than the conventional

understandings outlined in the first section. First, it is important to note that looking at ISIS in

strictly religious terms is an Orientalist approach, which serves to perpetuate the "clash between

Islam and Modernity." I argue that ISIS is a *modern* phenomenon and its use of religious rhetoric

should not place it in the colonial category of *traditional.* The alliances and elective affinity

between some Islamist groups and American interests in the region, when they are perceived to

serve a strategic interest, is well supported in the literature.[898] However, while religion is a

problematic entry point into the analysis of ISIS, a critical analysis of the ideological discourse

of ISIS – a militant version of Wahhabism and Salafism – is warranted. Second, many critical

scholars have attributed the rise of ISIS to the American invasion of Iraq and occupation policies

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[897] Ibid., 79.

[898] See Ahmad, "Islam, Islamisms and the West," 2008; Dimitrakis, *The Secret War in Afghanistan: The Soviet Union, China, and Anglo-American Intelligence in the Afghan War,* 2013; Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy: Oil, Arms and Irrationality," 2003.

of neo-liberalization, de-Ba'athification, sectarianism, and support for the former Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki whose corruption and sectarian politics further marginalized and incensed the Sunni population.[899] Finally, the international and regional *proxy war* in Syria is another important aspect of the emergence of this group that must be taken into consideration. These three aspects are interconnected and cannot explain ISIS alone. I begin with the contention that ISIS is a modern phenomenon, with roots in Al Qaeda, but also that it is a movement which has transformed into what it is within the aforementioned context of the American invasion of Iraq and the Syrian war.

5.4.1 Unlikely allies? American Strategic Interests and Militant Islamists

While religion should not be the point of departure for studying ISIS, the influential Wahhabi and Salafi movements in the region cannot be overlooked. Abu Rabi' historically contextualizes the emergence of these movements. For him, petroleum wealth irreversibly changed the social and economic structures in the Gulf states, making them more dependent on the international market. This eruption of wealth, however, "also unleashed the forces of puritanical Islam in some of these countries and created militant Salafiyyah, a movement that refuses to coexist with the social and political status quo in the same way that most leading *ulema* did."[900] This has resulted in the "creation of fringe, 'militant' Islamist movements, which believe violence is the only means of constructing the envisioned Islamic society and state."[901]

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[899] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 2015; Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014; Alnasseri, "ISIS Fills Power Vacuum in Iraq Fundamentally Created by U.S. Foreign Policy," 2014; Gerges, *ISIS: A History,* 2016.
[900] Abu Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Reader,* xvii.
[901] Ibid.

There is an ongoing debate within Islamism between Wahhabism and Salafism;[902] both have deeply influenced militant movements such Al Qaeda and ISIS. For Fawaz Gerges, "the world according to ISIS is frozen in time and space, incorporating the rules and laws of seventh-century Arabia into the twenty-first century."[903] The Salafists claim a "strict adherence to the normative practice of *al-salaf al-salib* (the pious forebears)."[904] While they insist on observing norms from the Islamic foundational texts, the Qur'an, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, the authority of Salafi 'ulema is "based far more on directly interpreting the foundational texts than it is on any systematic engagement with the Islamic scholarly tradition."[905] Wahhabism is named for Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1792) who in 1745 established an alliance with Muhammad Ibn Saud, the forefather of the current Saudi ruling family.[906] A "crucial" force in the making of the modern Saudi Arabian state, "Wahhabism's influence extended well beyond Arabia into Iraq and the Gulf, and would directly and indirectly influence nineteenth century resistance movements in Afghanistan, India, North and West Africa."[907] Saudi Arabia plays a pivotal role in exporting the ideology of extremist jihadism, deeply rooted in these traditions of Wahhabism and Salafism, in its struggle for regional hegemony and rivalry with Iran in Iraq and Syria. However, this is not a new role; the Saudi regime supported the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1950s in order to counter the rise of Arab nationalism advocated by Nasser and by the Ba'ath in Iraq and Syria.[908] This occurred within the context of the Cold War, which "transformed the romance between the Saudi princes

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[902] For good introductory reader to these debates see Abu Rabi's *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, 2010; Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden,* 2009.
[903] Gerges, *ISIS,* 26.
[904] Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought,* 19.
[905] Ibid.
[906] Ibid., 426.
[907] Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought,"* 426.
[908] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy," 2003.

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and the oil companies into a stable marriage between Western Liberalism and Saudi fundamentalism."[909]

This correlation of interests between some elites in the "Muslim world" and the United States, beginning in the Cold War era, is important to highlight. Achcar argues, "Islamic fundamentalism –most of whose varieties allied under Wahhabite tutelage –subsequently became the main ideological tool of the anti-communist and antinationalist struggle in the Islamic world orchestrated by Washington in alliance with Riyadh [Saudi Arabia]."[910] In short, like Abu Rabi', Mahdavi, Alnasseri and many other critical scholars, Achcar contends that the "United States is thus directly responsible for the resurgence of anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism."[911] Moreover, not only did the United States contribute directly to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, "but by helping to defeat and crush the Left and progressive nationalism throughout the Islamic world, it freed up the space for political Islam as the only ideological and organizational expression of popular resentment."[912] In other words, Achcar argues that rather than reflecting an inherent extremism in the region, Islamic fundamentalism "won out only by default, after its competition was eliminated by their common adversary."[913]

Providing an economic aspect to the aforementioned argument put forth by Mahdavi that Islamists and Orientalists are both essentialist, scholars such as Samir Amin,[914] Sabah Alnasseri,[915] and Osman Shahin[916] emphasize the correlation of interests between imperialism and militant Islamists. Amin writes, "in reality, the militants of political Islam are not truly

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[909] Ibid. 58.
[910] Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarism*, 36.
[911] Ibid., 37.
[912] Ibid.
[913] Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarism*, 37.
[914] Amin, "Political Islam in the Service of Imperialism," 2007.
[915] Alnasseri, "Understanding Iraq," 2008.
[916] Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.

interested in discussing the dogmas that form religion."[917] Rather, he argues, "the exclusive

emphasis on culture allows political Islam to eliminate from every sphere of life the real social

confrontations between the popular classes and the globalized capitalist system that oppresses

and exploits them…they are not means of support for the struggles of the popular classes against

the system responsible for their poverty."[918] In short, in relation to real social issues, Amin

suggests that "political Islam aligns itself with the camp of dependent capitalism and dominant

imperialism. It defends the principle of the sacred character of property and legitimizes the

inequality and all the requirements of capitalist reproduction."[919] This is not to say that political

Islam is a monolithic and homogenous category; Mohammmed Ayoob shows the variations in

organization and ideology among Islamist movements particular to their contexts, regardless of

some common themes and rhetoric they use.[920] This is important and I am not suggesting that

militant Islamism is literally created by the West, or that the movements it denotes always

cooperate with each other, or other similarly simplistic arguments. The point I am making here is

that there has been an elective affinity between the hegemonic forces of the West and elements

of militant Islamist/ Salafism/ Wahhabism in a number of cases in the Middle East. The classic

examples of this are the *Mujahedeen* in Afghanistan during the Cold War and as will be

discussed later in this chapter, the militant Islamists in Syria today.

Alnasseri contends that we cannot understand the conflict in Iraq and sectarian civil war

without understanding the *neoliberalization*[921] of Iraq. Speaking specifically of the Iraqi case,

Alnasseri also suggests that there was a correlation of interests between the Bush administration

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[917] Amin, "Political Islam in the Service of Imperialism," 2007.
[918] Ibid.
[919] Ibid.
[920] Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World,* 2009.
[921] Neoliberalization is used here consciously to challenge the rhetoric of democratization by the US administration as a pretext for the war on Iraq.

and the ruling classes of Iraq: "both of them have their own agendas and the Iraqi government is not a puppet of the US, they have their own class project but they rely heavily on the British and American occupation in Iraq to rebuild and cement their position within the state apparatus and outside."[922] Similarly, in an interview with *Jaddaliyya,* Osman Shahin, a Turkish political scientist, highlights the political and economic links between ISIS and Turkey. He says, "for a long time the Turkish government gave free passage to those jihadists which were actually flowing into Syria from Europe and from the United States and Canada."[923] I discuss this in greater detail in the last section, which focuses on the regional and international proxy war in Syria.

5.4.2 The Anglo-American Invasion and Occupation

Despite the Bush administration's claims that the Saddam Hussein regime supported Al Qaeda, it is widely accepted now that "there was hardly any activity of Al Qaeda in Iraq at the time of the US invasion."[924] Gerges emphasizes that in addition to the 9/11 Commission Report, "a senior Al Qaeda military commander, Seif al-Adl, confirmed that his group had no connection with [Saddam] Hussein and considered him a staunch enemy."[925] However, the security vacuum created by the invasion and occupation facilitated the arrival of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2003 who was "instrumental in building a base of Al Qaeda in Iraq and laying the foundation for the subsequent emergence of ISIS."[926] Gerges makes a distinction between the earlier wave of jihadists such as bin Laden and Zarqawi's generation, arguing the latter lacked the theological depth of the waves of the 1970s and 1990s; in a way, "Zarqawi was the representative of a new

[922] Alnasseri, "Sectarianism and What's Going on in Iraq," 2011.
[923] Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.
[924] Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about Islamic State," 2015.
[925] Gerges, *ISIS,* 52.
[926] Ibid., 57.

wave of jihadists who came from deeply disadvantaged and marginalized social

backgrounds."[927]

In the post-2003 period, the Anglo-American coalition and their Iraqi exile allies in power

labelled all resistance to the occupation as "foreign in origin and anti-Iraqi"[928] in order to

propagate a narrative of "fighting terror" and to suppress genuine Iraqi resistance to the

occupation. It is important to emphasize the instrumental use of this discourse to support

occupation policies, and to understand the way in which this fuelled much resentment among the

disenfranchised Iraqis. This assertion is echoed by Alnasseri, "this is the narrative now. If you

opposed the invasion or cautioned that violence will ensue as opposed to democracy with the

removal of Saddam, you were accused of being either a Ba'athist or a Sunni. There is no

opposition to the government and no engaging with the government as a democratic subject."[929]

This politics of labelling resulted in the detainment and confinement of Iraqis; American forces

imprisoned many of those deemed as "insurgents" during the occupation.[930] With little oversight,

"simply being a 'suspicious looking' military-aged male in the vicinity of an attack was enough

to land one behind bars."[931] The scandal at Abu Ghraib made headlines for the torture and abuse

of several thousand Iraqis,[932] most of whom, including "women and teenagers – were

civilians"[933] who had been "picked up in random military sweeps and at highway

checkpoints."[934] Those imprisoned generally fell into three "loosely defined categories: common

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[927] Ibid.
[928] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the 21st Century*, 217.
[929] Alnasseri, "Global Flashpoints: Reactions to Imperialism and Neoliberalism," 2007.
[930] Thompson and Suri, "How America Helped ISIS," 2014.
[931] Thompson and Suri, "How America Helped ISIS," 2014.
[932] See Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," 2004; Leung, "Abuse of Iraqi POWS by GIS Probed," 2004; Leung, "Abuse at Abu Ghraib," 2004; HRW, "The Road to Abu Ghraib," 2004; Harding, "After Abu Ghraib," 2004; Goodman, "Private Contractors and Torture at Abu Ghraib, Iraq," 2004.
[933] Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," 2004.
[934] Ibid. Emphasis added.

criminals; security detainees suspected of 'crimes against the coalition;' and a *small number* of suspected 'high-value' leaders of the insurgency against the coalition forces."[935] These collective punishments in large areas were implemented due to Iraqis' resistance to American occupation, which Zyad Saeed reminds us is *legislated/outlined in International law*.[936] In other words, the label of "insurgent" or "terrorist" enabled the coalition forces to render illegal what is legislated by international law, the right to resist a foreign occupation.[937]

The US policy of detention provided these "inmates" with an opportunity to organize themselves; it also served to *radicalize* them. Gerges reminds us that "Zarqawi started with fewer than thirty fighters at the beginning of the US-led invasion of Iraq"[938] but he rapidly collected at least "five thousand full-time fighters, bolstered by twenty thousand homegrown supporters."[939] For Gerges, this speaks to the "rapid radicalization and militarization of Iraqi society and Al Qaeda's ability to infiltrate the country's fragile body politic."[940] Recognizing that the political system in Iraq under Saddam Hussein was extremely problematic, Zyad Saeed, an Iraqi international law expert, echoes Gerges' work from the ground. He contends that the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq "manufactured a system of violence"[941] wherein thousands of mostly young men were randomly arrested and detained in prisons such as Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca and in other places like Mosul and the north of Iraq for several months and then released.[942]

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[935] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[936] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[937] Saeed, *Hoqooq al-Insan fi thil al-Ihtilal: Doroosat Tutbeeqiyah Lilihtilal al-Amreekee al-Iraq* (The Rights of Man Under Occupation: An Empirical Study of the American Occupation of Iraq), 2010.
[938] Gerges, ISIS, 67.
[939] Ibid.
[940] Ibid.
[941] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[942] Ibid.

In short, coalition prisons turned into recruitment centers and training grounds for the very militants the US was fighting and which were later unleashed on everyday Iraqis, especially by placing the "extremists" together in an effort to "keep the peace."[943] There were "26,000 detainees at the height of the war, and over 100,000 individuals passed through the gates of camps Bucca, Cropper, and Taji,"[944] between 2003 and 2009, including the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Baghdadi, born in the Iraqi city of Samarra, was captured by American forces in the city of Fallujah in February of 2004, a few months after he had helped form a militant group, *Jeish Ah al-Sunna al-Jamaah.*[945] This small militant group was "one of dozens that sprouted from a broad Sunni revolt – many of which would soon come together under the flag of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and then the Islamic State of Iraq."[946]

Sa'ad Jawad, an Iraqi professor of political science who left Iraq in 2009, also points to these occupation policies as a factor in the emergence of Al Qaeda (and later, ISIS) in post-invasion Iraq. He posits, some "Sunnis and especially the army officers of the old army – Iraqi army" were subject to "the brutality of the Americans" and also found themselves in American Iraqi prisons or camps."[947] Jawad continues, "these prisons or camps were really the schools where ISIS was established."[948] Interestingly, "some of them claimed that they were even trained by the Americans to fight Al Qaeda in Iraq."[949] While the US military claimed that its detention operations were valid and necessary, Saeed points out that collective torture in Abu Ghraib

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[943] This has been widely reported. See Thompson and Suri, "How America Helped ISIS," 2014; Chulov, "ISIS: The Inside Story," 2014; McCoy, "How the Islamic State evolved in an American Prison," 2014; Parks, "How a US Prison Camp Helped Create ISIS," 2015; McCoy, "Camp Bucca: The US Prison that Became the Birthplace of ISIS," 2014; Klausner, "US Prison Camps in Iraq Accidentally Formed ISIS," 2015.
[944] Thompson and Suri, "How America Helped ISIS," 2014.
[945] Chulov, "ISIS: The Inside Story," 2014.
[946] Ibid.
[947] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[948] Ibid.
[949] Ibid.

generated people who were spiteful, disgruntled and unlawful on society, on the system and on those perceived to be the causes of their malcontent.[950] In addition to breeding resentment and hardened criminals, these prisons provided these "inmates" an opportunity they would have otherwise not had; in an interview for *the Guardian,* one of the men imprisoned in 2004 for decades at Camp Bucca and now a senior official within ISIS, recounted "we could never have all gotten together like this in Baghdad, or anywhere else, it would have been impossibly dangerous. Here, we were not only safe, but we were only a few hundred meters away from the entire Al Qaeda leadership."[951]

Relatedly, unsecured borders in the aftermath of the invasion and occupation policies, which left the state fragmented, quickly turned Iraq into a breeding ground for groups like Al Qaeda.[952] Jawad described the post-2003 era as complete chaos; the American occupation "created the violence: no law, no order, no courts, no police force, even a traffic ordinance – *shorta al muroor* – could not do his duty."[953] Furthermore, he recounts,

> they left the country open to organized crime, to revenge, to stealing, to the mobs in other words and to the militias that came. And this is what created violence. Some of these people covered their crimes through 'sectarianism.' The Sunnis were the target at the beginning and then the Sunnis started to prepare themselves to take revenge from the Shiites or the Kurds who killed their sons and then put them into prisons and then *Al Qaeda* was able to come to Iraq immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein. And there was a sectarian war against the Shiites because they were accused of being the Iranian stooges and what have you and the Shiites started to kill the Sunnis accusing them of being supporters of *Al Qaeda*. And the government, the US and their administration between 2003 and 2005 did nothing.[954]

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[950] Zyad Saeed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 14, 2016.
[951] Chulov, "ISIS: The Inside Story," 2014.
[952] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.
[953] Ibid.
[954] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016

Echoing Jawad, Zaid Al-Ali recalls, "Iraq was fertile soil for sectarian violence…after 2003 the absence of the rule of law, and the absence of security institutions were main contributors to violence."[955] This chaos was combined with a lack of state security, which further empowered various sectarian militias and contributed to the fragmentation of the state along sectarian lines. Gerges emphasizes sectarianism as the "fuel that powers ISIS,"[956] arguing, "since 2003 Iraq has descended into a sustained crisis, inflaming the grievances of the Sunni population over their disempowerment under the new Shi'a ascendancy and preponderant Iranian influence."[957] Within this context, criminal activity also became a source of financial gain; despite the sectarian rhetoric, much of the interviewees reported that financial gain in an atmosphere of lawlessness and severe unemployment (due to the dissolution of the state) was a major contributing factor to this type of violence.[958]

Under the occupation, the neo-liberalization of the economy, and the failure of the Iraqi state to provide service to its citizens also gave rise to conditions that led to a violent resistance to the occupation, and to the rise of jihadists like Al Qaeda and later, ISIS. The "Bremer Orders" were essentially geared towards opening the Iraqi economy to foreign control;[959] These were examined in chapter three but what is important to note here is that these Orders entailed the re-making of Iraq into America's image while "virtually ignoring the pressing needs of the Iraqi people."[960] This lack of attention to the needs of ordinary Iraqis was a major advantage to Al Qaeda and later, ISIS. The links between mass poverty and oppression with social upheaval and

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955 Zaid Ali-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 11, 2016.
956 Gerges, *ISIS,* 12.
957 Ibid.
958 Many of the interviewees made this point.
959 These are discussed in chapter three, which focuses on the invasion and occupation of Iraq.
960 Juhasz, "Capitalism gone wild,"19.

violence is well established in the literature. Gerges argues, "filling an ideational and institutional void, ISIS stepped in and offered aggrieved Sunnis a potent pan-Sunni (sectarian-Islamist) identity that transcends nationality, ethnicity, and borders."[961] Similarly, in grappling with the question of why we see the emergence of fanatical reactionary ideologies, Achcar argues, "in fact, these expressions of deep social frustrations cannot be separated from the dismantling of the welfare state, the rise of unemployment, and the increasing precariousness of life wrought by neoliberal policies."[962]

Furthermore, we cannot defeat these currents through ideology, "you need above all to end the conditions that constitute a breeding ground for their ideologies, and these are social, economic and political conditions."[963] Indeed, these social conditions were evident in Iraq as a result of the occupation policies; "the weight of the counterinsurgency operations from the Anglo-American occupation were followed by the neglect and military responses of the Al Maliki regime to any expression of local demands."[964] Practically, de-Ba'athification and the disbanding of the Iraqi army left a significant number of the population without employment but also disenfranchised from the new state. As discussed earlier, the state was the biggest employer in Iraq under the Ba'ath regime, and as a means of survival or advancement, one often had to be a member of the Party. This was also a policy with dangerous implications as the increasingly disenfranchised population included a significant proportion of highly trained military personnel.

With no "political representation, or basic security," the withdrawal of the US military in 2011, Ismael argues,

> left northern and western Iraq outside the writ of the [Kurdish Regional Government] KRG particularly vulnerable. Composed

[961] Gerges, *ISIS,* 12.
[962] Achcar, "Nothing mysterious about Islamic State," 2015.
[963] Ibid.
[964] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 219.

of a majority of Sunni Arabs, as well as an enormously diverse array of ethnic and religious minorities, these regions had borne the brunt of heavy fighting in opposition to occupation and the new political order implanted by Anglo-American military power.[965]

Two important things occurred following the American withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. One, the Kurdish region was disengaged from the "Iraqi federal project" and two, Al Maliki's government's sole focus on Baghdad and the competition between the Shi'a groups in the South left "Anbar and the Nineveh provinces to wither."[966] These two developments weakened the authority and legitimacy of the Iraqi state in these regions, and increased dissatisfaction and opposition to the state.

These local demands included a *perception* that the Shi'a were the beneficiaries of the newly created Iraqi state. As discussed earlier, sectarianism is not a natural phenomenon in Iraq; instead, I have argued that institutionalized sectarianism, the *sectarianization* of Iraq in the post-2003 era under the occupation, fuelled much of this seeming "sectarian" violence. The lack of a response by Al Maliki's government to local demands further exacerbated the situation. For example, in a "Day of Rage" to protest government corruption and non-existent basic services, in Mosul and Hawija in the north, Baghdad, and Basra in the South, at least "six people were killed and 75 were injured in clashes with security services as protestors tried to attack government buildings."[967] While protestors across the Middle East were focused on democracy, protestors in Iraq complained of "high unemployment, a shortage of drinking water and frequent power cuts."[968] Rather than respond to protestors across Iraq, Nouri Al Maliki "urged people to skip the rally, which he alleged was organized by groups loyal to former ruler Saddam Hussein, and Al

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[965] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 219.
[966] Ibid., 220.
[967] Sherwood and Finn, "Thousands Join 'Day of Rage' Across the Middle East," 2011.
[968] Ibid.

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Qaeda."[969] This day was preceded by weeks of demonstrations in Baghdad's *Tahrir Square,* for

government reform where slogans of "no, no to terrorists; no, no to Baathists; no, no to

Maliki!"[970] could be heard. It is important to highlight the anti-sectarian nature of these protests:

"a majority of Iraqis surveyed in 2016 named ending the quota system as the most important step

that the country could take toward political reconciliation."[971]

The Al Maliki's government's violent response to the protests in the Sunni-majority

portions of Samarra, Diyalah and Kirkuk also escalated the tensions and strengthened the Al

Qaeda/ISIS stronghold. These protests were supported by cross-sectarian leaders such as

Muqtada al-Sadr as well as Kurdish lawmakers.[972] However, the Al Maliki regime was unwilling

to give into their demands, to include locally elected leaders within the federal decision-making

process or legitimize their complaints.[973] Moreover, the Al Maliki government responded with

state security forces: Ismael and Ismael write, "on April 23, 2013, a military raid against the

protest encampment led to dozens of civilian deaths and cemented the sectarian divide."[974] For

Ismael and Ismael, US efforts to portray all such instances of violence as driven by "terrorism"

and to de-emphasize the failed state-building project in effect fail to acknowledge the suffering

of *all* Iraqis regardless of sectarian and ethnic affiliations.[975] This helped this situation of civil

strife accumulate, which served as the "tinder" for future conflict.[976]

5.4.3 Regional Politics, then Proxy War in Syria

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[969] Al Jazeera, "Tensions Flare in Iraq Rallies," 2011.
[970] Healy and Schmidt, "Demonstrations Turn Violent in Iraq," 2011.
[971] Boduszynski, "Iraq's Year of Rage," 115.
[972] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 220.
[973] Ibid.
[974] Ibid.
[975] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 221.
[976] Ibid.

Geostrategic concerns by states in the region are also important to take into consideration when analyzing seeming regional support for ISIS. Saudi Arabia, a state which perceives itself as the keeper of the faith in the Islamic world, has long rivaled Iran for hegemonic status in the region. While political animosities between these two states can be real as conventional analysis by Western political scientists suggests, I have previously argued in this study that the leading international relations theories implicit in these analyses are often not used to examine the foreign policies of these states. That is, conventional theories of international relations are used to analyze the foreign policies of states in the Global North. However, foreign policies of states in the Global South and in this case, the Middle East, are often characterized by irrational behaviours, tribal and sectarian affiliations, or fanaticism rather than geostrategic or economic or political interests. The key to the problem of *how* to analyze the Middle East, Halliday argues, is to question the "*very premise on which the argument about the 'failure' of Middle Eastern social sciences rests.*"[977] That is, to challenge the idea that the region can be understood through "taking an entity called 'culture,' or some version of religious belief, or some linguistic 'essence,' as a general explanatory factor, an independent variable."[978] More importantly, "culturalist explanations often serve the hegemonic global order to rationalize the superiority of the West and the subordination/inferiority of the rest."[979] This section of this chapter is intended to serve as one instance of this critique and challenge this perception of the Middle East as "outside of the range" of international relations theory. As such, this last section highlights regional politics and the war in Syria through the lens of geo-strategy, political economy and geopolitics.

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[977] Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology,* 4.
[978] Ibid.
[979] Mahdavi, "Postrevolutionary Iran: Resisting Global and Regional Hegemony," 142.

The complete destruction of the Iraqi state had very real implications for the region. A long-time ally of the US, King Abdullah of Jordan referred to the dangers of the "'Shi'a crescent' in December 2004, one stretching from Damascus to Tehran, passing through Baghdad"[980] as a result of the ambiguous nature of the newly "re-created" Iraqi state but also because of Iran's *perceived* heavy influence within the state. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia reinforced the notion of a "Shi'a crescent" while the President of Egypt at the time, Mubarak argued that "Iran has an influence over Shi'a who make up 65 percent of Iraq's population."[981] Essentially, this crescent means Iran plays a "central role" in "mobilizing Shi'ite communities and exploiting their socio-political grievances along sectarian fault-lines to secure its own regional dominance."[982] This essentialist and culturalist argument is problematized by Mahdavi who argues it overlooks divisions among the Shi'a and Sunni groups, the alliances between Shi'a Arabs and Sunni Kurds in post-2003 Iraq, the role of the Anglo-American occupation as well as the roles of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the ongoing crisis in Iraq.[983] Moreover, Mahdavi challenges the problematic and cultural explanations that emphasize Iran's religious sect; he counters that an analysis of geopolitics, realpolitik, and domestic factors are more useful to understand Iran's foreign policy in the region and internationally.[984]

However, what Alaaldin calls "sectarian polarisation of the region,"[985] I suggest is states behaving in accordance with *realpolitik* in the context of the international system.[986] That is,

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[980] Alaaldin, "Shia crescent: self-fulfilling prophecy," 2015.
[981] Mahdavi, "Postrevolutionary Iran: Resisting global and regional hegemony," 161.
[982] Ibid.
[983] Mahdavi, "Postrevolutionary Iran: Resisting global and regional hegemony," 2014.
[984] See Mahdavi, "Iran: It's the Geopolitics Stupid!" 2013.
[985] Alaaldin, "Shia crescent: self-fulfilling prophecy," 2015.
[986] I recognize that I have critiqued conventional international relations theory throughout this work. My intention here is to emphasize that conventional or predominant understandings of the international system are conventional because they are perpetuated by *all* actors in the system (both in the Global North and South). I am calling for the evaluation of state foreign policy using the same standards rather than labelling behaviour by states in the Global

with a weakened Iraqi state as its neighbour, Iran seized the opportunity to utilize religious

affiliations as a mechanism to build strategic alliances with parties in Iraq in order to ensure its

political interests in the region. Similarly, Saudi Arabia and other states of the Persian Gulf

region supported extremist Salafism in Iraq to maximize their regional influence and, to push

back Iran's "regional ambition." This regional rivalry was cloaked in "Shi'a-Sunni" discourse.

As discussed earlier, there are real differences between these religious sects, especially since

these realities have had a decade to coagulate. The point, however, is to underline the

politicization of these identities that gives them these meanings. Ironically, it is the politicization

of these religious identities in the context of power politics and states' regional rivalry, which

serves to *de-politicize* what is happening in Iraq and the region by focusing solely on culture or

sect.

Similarly, Turkey supported the Syrian militant extremists and had controversial relations

with ISIS to maximize its regional influence in the post-Arab Spring era. This should be

analyzed in the context of the rise of "neo-Ottomanism" in Turkish foreign policy under

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[987] Shahin argues former Turkish Prime Minister Davutoglu

saw "Turkey as a leader of the Islamic world" with much "potential to fulfill in the Middle

East."[988] Believing in the importance of reviving the Ottoman Empire, Davutoglu once argued

"Turkey has to revive its potential and become the cultural, economic, and political leader of the

region."[989] Moreover, the "2011 uprisings from the perspective of Davutoglu gave the Turkish

Republic the much needed opportunity to seize the moment so they wanted to actually create a

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North in accordance with conventional theory and behaviour by states in the Global South by a different standard, one where they are irrational, fanatical, etc.

[987] See Zalewiski, Pitor "How turkey went from Zero problems to zero friends." 2013; Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.

[988] Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.

[989] Ibid.

Sunni belt…Erdogan and Davutoglu think that the Turkish Republic should be the leader of the Sunni world."[990] This is seen as a way to compete with the Shi'a Iranian state, which can be historically contextualized into a political and economic competition between the two empires-turned-states.

Equally important, is the "Kurdish Question" in Turkey and Turkish fears of a strengthened separatist Kurdish movement, which incited Turkish support for militant Islamists in Syria who are fighting the Kurds' People's Protection Unit (YPG) in Rojava, Syria. According to Shahin, Erdogan benefits from supporting ISIS militarily through providing arms to *Jabhat Fateh al-Sham,* formerly known as *Jabhat al-Nusra,* or the al-Nusra Front (the Al Qaeda offshoot in Syria). This is due to Turkey's sizable Kurdish population and the struggle between the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Turkish state. Erdogan pursued a strategy of supporting militant groups in Syria and Iraq in order to weaken the Kurdish factions, which in turn, would weaken the Kurds in Turkey.[991] Turkey also benefits economically through the illegal oil trade and capital because of their aforementioned political interests in weakening the Kurds in Turkey and Syria.[992] Specifically, "for several months, at least, the Turkish government by turning a blind eye towards the oil trade, illegal oil trade, between ISIS and some Turkish authorities, provided ISIS with some capital, which was much needed."[993] In other words, 'the enemy of my enemy can be my friend for the time being' is a fitting characterization of the *strategic* alliances made between actors in the region. It is important to note, however, that Turkey became a target of ISIS as they slowly changed their policy of regime change in Syria

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[990] Ibid.
[991] See Bekdil, "Dateline: Turkey's Double Game with ISIS," 2015; BBC News, "Turkey v Syria's Kurds v Islamic State," 2016; Graeber, "Turkey Could Cut Off Islamic State's Supply Lines. So Why Doesn't It?" 2015; Phillips, "ISIS-Turkey Links," 2014; Edelman, "America's Dangerous Bargain with Turkey," 2015.
[992] Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.
[993] Razazan, "A Shift in Turkey's Foreign Policy? An Interview with Osman Shahin," 2015.

because they realized, along with some of their Western allies, they are playing with a monster (ISIS).[994]

The sectarianization of Iraqi politics was not a single phenomenon but had regional reverberations. Alnasseri calls this the "regional moment" wherein he argues,

> this sectarianization and militarization of the conflict in Iraq and Syria and Libya, etc. are nothing but the mechanism through which the US and other European imperialists, like the UK and France and their regional supporters – *to push back against the Arab revolutions*, to push back against people's demands, and to try to reproduce the status quo ante before the revolutions. So, it is a means through which the United States tries to stabilize its regional allies against the demands of the people.[995]

The invasion and occupation of Iraq gave Iran an opportunity to exert its influence through certain Shi'a groups such as the SCIRI and the Da'wa Party. Achcar argues, "resentment against the US occupation was compounded by the fact that Iran was taking advantage of it in order to spread its influence. This prepared the ground for the growth of Al Qaeda in Sunni Arab regions."[996] It also incited domestic tensions among the various interest groups in Iraq. However, "regionally, the invasion of Iraq and the unfolding developments amplified sectarian tensions, with Jordanian King Abdullah warning of an incipient 'Shi'a crescent' threatening the region while Saudi Kind Abdullah – in a conversation with his American interlocutor – exhorted an attack on Iran to 'cut off the head of the (Shi'a) snake.'"[997]

At the same time, a moment of mass movements demanding civil and economic rights swept the region, which gave way to optimism. This was quickly repressed when protests in

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[994] See Solomon and Hille, "Turkey and Russia Reassess Role in Syria," 2016; Sayigh, "Ceasefire in Syria: Turkish Policy Sets Syria on a New Path," 2016; Shaheen and Chulov, "Syrian Revels Stunned as Turkey Signals Normalization of Damascus Relations," 2016; Gulf News, "Turkey Shifts Syria Focus Away from Regime Change," 2017.

[995] Alnasseri, "ISIS Fills Power Vacuum in Iraq Fundamentally Created by U.S. Foreign Policy," 2014. Emphasis added.

[996] Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about Islamic State," 2015.

[997] Ismael and Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century,* 40.

Syria were met with violent government opposition, which turned into what appeared to be a civil war, creating a sectarian conflict exacerbated by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and drawing in Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey. Thus, "funded by private Gulf Arab money, ISIS entered the Syrian war in 2012…political support from the West and logistical support from Turkey and the Gulf Arab states allowed it to thrive in Syria."[998] While the Syrian war is not a focus of this work, it is important to understand it as a "proxy" war wherein both global and regional powers are involved for various reasons. Syria is geo-strategically important for Iran and Russia and the West – US, UK, France, and Israel – who favour a pro-Western regime in Syria with no ties to Iran or Hezbollah in Lebanon. In this way, the Syrian war has turned into a proxy war between two camps: the Syrian government and its allies – Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, China – and the West and its regional allies, including militant Salafists and Al Qaeda in Syria.[999] It is this link with militant Islamists such as Al Qaeda and then ISIS, which makes the Syrian case relevant to understanding ISIS in post-2003 Iraq.

There were some arguable reports that Bashar Al Assad's government released jihadists from prisons in 2011, militarizing the conflict within Syria in order to give credibility to its narrative that "he is in a war against terrorism and not against a civil rebellion."[1000] There is no evidence to suggest Assad created ISIS; "ISIS is a product of the U.S. war on Iraq, having been formed first as Al Qaeda in Iraq by the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi."[1001] However, Assad's brutality in repressing the peaceful demonstrations in 2011 did play a role in strengthening ISIS. For Achcar, Assad's motivation to release jihadists in the Fall of 2011 was to

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[998] Prashad, "The Geopolitics of the Islamic State," 2014.
[999] See Abukhalil, "The Left and the Syria Debate," 2016; Hughes, "Syria and the Perils of Proxy Warfare," 2014; BBC News, "Syria: The Story of Conflict," 2016; Gerges, "Saudi Arabia and Iran Must end their Proxy War in Syria," 2013.
[1000] Prasad, "The Geopolitics of the Islamic State," 2014.
[1001] Prasad, "The Geopolitics of the Islamic State," 2014.

show the only alternative to his regime was jihadism.[1002] As shown in the literature, there has

been a link between the jihadists in Syria and Iraq, which was also fuelled by the aforementioned

de-Ba'athification of Iraq. Speaking to the *strategic alliance between the old Ba'athists and the*

ISIS, Sa'ad Jawad asserts, "the golden opportunity came to ISIS when the Syrian situation

exploded. They found a very good environment to develop and, of course, the *[ISIS] staff*

officers are mainly Iraqi old army officers so they went to Syria in the hope of establishing their

main base there."[1003] However, they faced a problem because "the Syrian army was composed,

was fighting; Syria did not collapse, although they took some areas but the Syrians continued to

fight. Syria continued to exist, and they realized they had a softer spot nearby, which is Iraq."[1004]

Cooperating with the old leadership of the Ba'ath Party was strategic on both sides; the

Ba'athists "thought they could use ISIS to occupy Mosul and advance to Tikrit and Anbar

because there was no real army to get rid of them and a lot of the members of the (new) Iraqi

army were bribed by the members of ISIS and Baathists at that time and they thought they could

use them to establish a base in Iraq."[1005] Furthermore, "if you notice that when ISIS occupied

Mosul and Tikrit and Anbar at the beginning, most of the governors or the provincial leaders

were all old Baathists… and then after ISIS was quicker than the Baathists, and they executed

them and they pushed them out."[1006]

The legacy of the occupation policies cannot be the sole factor under consideration in

current Iraqi politics. American – selected and – supported political elites, and their sectarian

policies and corruption have also been damaging. The occupation policies and the Al Maliki

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[1002] Achcar, "Nothing mysterious about Islamic State," 2015.
[1003] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016. Emphasis added.
[1004] Ibid.
[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Sa'ad Jawad, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), March 2, 2016.

government's sectarian policies and corruption laid the groundwork for the emergence of such an unprecedented form of violence, which is taking place in the name of God, but remains in the service of political and economic interests of local, regional, and global actors. In the regional context, as Achcar argues, "the militarization of the uprising [in Syria], on the one hand, and the Saudi and Qatari support given to Islamic fundamentalist groups, on the other hand, have indeed made a progressive alternative quite unlikely."[1007]

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the emergence of ISIS as the only regional factor to answer the question of what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq because it had and continues to have a profound impact on Iraqi politics, society, and demographics. I analyzed ISIS to highlight the disastrous results of the sectarianization of the Iraqi state, which I have critically examined throughout this study. However, its rise is also a reflection of the detrimental effects of the Anglo-American occupation, corrupt and sectarianism of Iraqi elites, such as Nouri Al Maliki, and the proxy war in Syria. In this way, the rise of ISIS, while very much originating within a specific post-2003 Iraqi context, speaks to all three levels of analysis used in this study: the international, the domestic and the regional.

It is an arduous task to provide an exhaustive analysis of the emergence of violent movements such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria within the confines of this chapter. However, the aim of this chapter was to provide a nuanced examination of ISIS rooted in the scholarship of critical scholars of the Middle East. The rise of ISIS and its rapid recruitment rate does not make it a revolutionary or counter-cultural movement; a substantial critique examines underlying

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[1007] Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about Islamic State," 2015.

symptomatic causes of such violence. In other words, it is important to understand the geo-political, colonial and imperial context which gave rise to militant Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism in the wider Middle Eastern and North Africa region. Specifically, I have contextualized the violence in post-2003 Iraq within the Anglo-American invasion, occupation policies, the Al Maliki government, and regional politics, especially the war in Syria. I suggested that critical postcolonial theory, with its critique of colonial modernity, offers a nuanced, historically contextualized, and a *political* approach to studying ISIS. I am using the *political* here as an alternative to the *de-politicized,* ahistorical, essentialist and Orientalist analysis of sectarianism and religion. More importantly, I argue that we cannot understand this violence without situating it within the dialectical relationship between the international and the domestic – between "us" and "them." This dominant understanding that violence is inherent to the Other, and of an inevitable "clash between us and them" is both problematic and dangerous; not only is it ahistorical but it also results in a perpetually reinforcing cycle of violence in the international system. This is why a military response could "win the battle" against ISIS, but it will not eradicate its violent ideology, which is nourished by the structural violence in the form of war, invasion, and socio-economic and political injustice. Echoing many critical scholars, I contended that alleviating the social, economic, and political grievances of the marginalized is a more substantial solution to the crisis of colonial modernity that has characterized this era in international relations.

It is especially important to avoid the simplistic prism of the "clash of civilizations" – an ever-lasting conflict between movements such as ISIS, which use the rhetoric of religion, and the West. This is a very naïve and problematic assertion; ISIS is a *symptom* of the failures of colonial modernity to provide for the everyday needs of people in the Global South. Peaceful

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protests in Sunni-majority areas occurred in 2012, which consisted "primarily of ordinary people demanding decent living conditions and an end to Sunni exclusion by the government as well as political factions, ranging from militants to those seeking concessions from Baghdad."[1008] Al-Jaberi writes, "the protestors in Tikrit and Anbar were demanding an end to corruption, poverty, unemployment and shortages of water and electricity. These grievances are at the root of popular dissatisfaction and by extension the advance of ISIS."[1009] Indeed, "there was nothing 'Sunni' about such grievances, which torment ordinary Iraqis and have incited them regularly. This explains why several Shi'a leaders publicly supported the Sunni majority protests."[1010] The problem however, was the response of the ruling elite, which was consistently to "recast the protests as an existential threat to the Shi'a, to the detriment of inter-sectarian class-solidarity."[1011] Many critical Iraqi scholars have shown the way in which "sectarian" rhetoric was used by the ruling elites, especially the exiles who had no indigenous support to draw from and relied heavily on sectarianism, to meet political and economic interest. Again, it is important to reiterate that the institutionalization of sectarianism is perhaps the most damaging legacy of the Anglo-American occupation; understanding the reasons for the conditions within which ISIS emerged is vital to working towards defeating their movement.

It is also inaccurate to paint the entire country, and the region, as inherently fundamentalist or extremist. Much of my interviews pointed to the large schism between the American-installed or supported political leaders in post-2003 Iraq and Iraqi people. President of the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq Yanar Mohammed maintained that demonstrations in Iraq's *Tahrir Square* have been continuous and non-sectarian in nature,

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[1008] Al-Jaberi, "Iraq Crisis: Divide-and-Rule in Defence of a Neoliberal Political Economy," 2014.
[1009] Ibid.
[1010] Ibid.
[1011] Ibid.

despite the Islamist Parties' relentless attempts at taking over the demonstrations in order to *sectarianize* them and render them meaningless.[1012] In 2012 and 2013 there were protests against corruption, sectarianism and government incompetence: "there is a spark and there are people who really want to move beyond that especially young people, especially women."[1013] Similarly, Mohammad recalls the mass protests in the Summer of 2015 under the slogan "*b'ism al deen bagona al haramiyah,*"[1014] meaning "the thieves plundered us in the name of religion." These sorts of protests were happening early on in the occupation and continue today; yet, much attention was placed on those who took up arms, which were very readily available in post-2003 Iraq.[1015] Disregarding the struggles of Iraqis – across sects and ethnicities – to make their voices heard against the occupation, the American-selected or supported political elites, sectarianism, and the corruption, and general incompetence of the government to provide services not only perpetuates Orientalist depictions of Iraqis as *fanatic, radical,* or *undemocratic,* but misses the critical grassroots mobilization that happens in Iraqi society.

Conclusion

> To date, the development of real democratic alternatives in the Middle East and Beyond have been suppressed by the permanent and multiple forms of interventions of imperialist powers.
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> **Sabah Alnasseri,** *Arab Revolutions and Beyond,* **2016.**

6.1 Introduction

[1012] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[1013] Nadje Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 13, 2016.
[1014] Yanar Mohammed, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 8, 2016.
[1015] All the interviewees made references to this.

In one of the worst suicide attacks since 2003, ISIS targeted Karrada, a predominantly Shi'a neighbourhood[1016] in Baghdad, on July 3, 2016. When Prime Minister, Haider Al Abadi, visited the scene with promises to increase security, residents were unhappy and greeted him with anger.[1017] Um Alaa, a local resident, held the government accountable: "All of the departments of the government are failures. They're the ones who brought terrorism here. Some of them are complicit with those who did this."[1018] Whether she is justified in her blame or not, her and other Iraqis' reactions to instances of violence tell us something important. Iraqis are fed up with the unaccountable and unrepresentative elites who are dislocated from their lives.

The war on Iraq began in 2003 and after thirteen years, Iraq continues to make headlines; the most recent of which focus on the operation to recapture Mosul from ISIS. With a message of unity and liberation, Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi announced the beginning of the operation to recapture Mosul in October 2016.[1019] The BBC reported that about 30,000 Iraqi government troops along with 4,000 Kurdish *Peshmerga* militia and Sunni tribal fighters as well as Shi'a-led paramilitary forces began their offensive on Monday October 17.[1020] US Special Operations Personnel are advising forces on the ground and "elite Iraqi counterterrorism forces" have joined the Operations.[1021] While this offensive is a new development in Iraqi politics, the familiar themes of "sectarianism," territory disputes between the government of Iraq and the KRG, and geostrategic concerns of neighbours such as Turkey and Syria are the focus of most analysis in the media and academia in the West. That is, the operation in Mosul and the way in which it is being conducted and analysed is a continuation of the concepts I have been challenging and

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[1016] While predominantly Shi'a, the attack's victims were also Sunni and Christian.
[1017] Picard, "Grief and anger in Baghdad: Iraq reels from bloodiest attack since 2003," 2016.
[1018] Ibid.
[1019] Iraqi Prime Minister Al Abadi, "Announcement of Mosul Operation (Arabic)," 2016.
[1020] BBC News, "Mosul: Iraq and Kurdish Troops Make Gains in Battle," 2016.
[1021] BBC News, "Mosul: Iraq and Kurdish Troops Make Gains in Battle," 2016.

problematizing throughout this work. This also speaks to the continued relevance of this research because without problematizing these lenses of "sectarianism," "Arab exceptionalism," "terrorism," among others, scholars and policymakers will continue to analyze events in Iraq and the Middle East in general in this manner, and respond to these events with the same old approach.

In post-2003 Iraq, the strongest and most violent secured their political and economic interests, while ordinary Iraqis suffered the effects of war and occupation. Today's Mosul Operations reflect and illustrate the animosities and tensions between the different military forces and militias, which make who will capture what land a secondary if not primary concern alongside liberating the people who have been living under the rule of ISIS. This echoes similar concerns at the height of the violence, which ensued shortly after the invasion and occupation of Iraq, wherein the major power blocs divided Iraq and claimed neighbourhoods as their "territory."

These concluding remarks begin with a summary of each chapter. This is followed by an analysis of the current Mosul Operations to demonstrate the continued relevance of the arguments/findings from each chapter. It also demonstrates the persistent themes and problematic lenses through which events in Iraq, and the wider Middle East, are analyzed, and which shape problematic policy responses by foreign powers. This study was driven by the research question, *why has the "democratic nation-building" project in Iraq failed since the US-led regime change in 2003 until 2016?*

Given the span of the war on Iraq, the conversation and debate has differed and shifted according to the ever-changing political, social and economic conditions in the country. The

following section highlights the arguments made in each chapter, particularly as they sought to answer the central research question of this study.

6.2 Chapter Summaries

Chapter One provided a critical literature review of the international context of the lead-up to the decision to invade Iraq as a site of the Global War on Terror. This chapter then offered a critical analysis of the conventional literature on Iraq as it provided "solutions" to the problems encountered by the Anglo-American occupation and nation-building after the removal of the Ba'ath regime. With a focus on questions of the different kinds of federalism, power-sharing, and conflict resolution, I argued that conventional literature on post-2003 Iraq problematically understood sectarian identities in Iraq as *primordial* and failed to consider the role of the invasion and occupation in the *sectarianization* of the Iraqi state. I also problematized the primary focus on major ethno-religious blocs and argued that a foreign and elite-led "democratic nation-building" process was inevitably going to fail because it served to fragment Iraqi society and politics and entrench violence.

Of course, once the occupation appeared to be failing, conventional critics who were pro-interventionist offered their perspective on what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq. However, I argued that these critiques were narrow, insufficient and without substance because they were state-centric. Specifically, they were made from the perspective of the global hegemon, the US, and in relation to the costs of the war and occupation "mistakes," or "oversights" such as the lack of security. This perspective undoubtedly results in "solutions" such as an increase in military to "keep the peace," using multilateral forces in order to appear "legitimate" to Iraqis and mitigate resistance, or withdrawal to let the "Iraqis handle their own problems." I challenged these views

by using a critical postcolonial/decolonial approach to shift the focus from that of the state to those suffering on the ground, the everyday Iraqis. I argued that this shift alters our "solutions" because the problem becomes not a "civil war" between sectarian Iraqis who cannot coexist peacefully but a foreign, violent intervention imposing an unrepresentative, top-down model of state-building. Accordingly, this theoretical approach, along with Subaltern Studies/history from below perspectives, allows us to explore the potentials of a grassroots, local, inclusive model of state-building.

This chapter also provided an analysis of the critical scholarship on why Iraq had failed to democratize. I argued that there were gradations of the level of critical analysis offered by various scholars. I demonstrated how some continued to be embedded within a "sectarian" framework despite their critique of the invasion and occupation. While others within this group problematized "sectarianism" as a direct result of occupation policies in post-2003 Iraq, other scholars examined the political economy of invasion and post-invasion Iraq, which was important but ignored the sectarianization of Iraq.

I argued that three major contributions of critical postcolonial theory make it ideal for this type of study: first, critical postcolonial theory takes seriously and engages with subjectivity and the process of *othering* and in turn, the foundational problem of "difference" in IR as both a discipline and practice. Second, critical postcolonial theories begin with the contention that colonialism and imperialism are processes that have shaped and continue to shape the international system; this allowed me to historicize and contextualize the events in 2003 and their aftermath. Finally, these theoretical frameworks help us to deconstruct the seeming naturalness and universality of the international system; but more importantly, they allow us to re-imagine, re-narrate, and re-construct alternatives to the current structure. This is especially applicable to

"history from below" and Subaltern Studies frameworks as modes of resistance; one of the biggest driving forces behind my interest in this study has been to shift the focus from that of the *state* to *people.* I did this by highlighting the *everyday Iraqis* whose lives have been turned upside down by this war and to show how under the current understanding of the international system, their political and economic fate has been heavily shaped by exogenous factors.

This research used three interrelated methods of *critical discourse analysis, archival research* and *semi-structured interviews*, which were underpinned by the theoretical frameworks I outlined above. The critical postcolonial approach emphasizes discourse as knowledge; as a method, critical discourse analysis emphasis the role of discourse in producing and resisting power and dominance. This study explored the "relationship between discourse and reality"[1022] in the particular context of the case of Iraq. Specifically, I conducted a discourse analysis informed by a postcolonial/decolonial perspective to problematize the invasion, occupation and "democratic nation-building" model, which has largely depended on a binary opposition between two historical discourses: the discourse of Western democracy, which produces the West as modern, civilized, and liberal and the Orientalist discourse, which constructs the non-West as its opposite, traditional, barbaric and authoritarian. The archival research and semi-structured interviews were underpinned by Subaltern Studies/history from below approaches, which offered a counter-story to the conventional narrative of what went wrong in post-2003 Iraq by inserting Iraqi voices and perspectives.

Chapter two answered the question of what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq by arguing that sectarianism was not as conventional narratives tell us, *inherent* to Iraqi society. The aim of this chapter was twofold: first, I challenged the related ideas of "sectarianism" and Arab/Muslim

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[1022] Halperin and Heath, *Political Research,* 313.

exceptionalism by critically examining the Anglo-American intervention and "nation-building." I argued that the conventional narrative identifying endogenous factors such as Iraqi sectarianism as the primary reason for the failures of the US-led "democratic nation-building" model was ahistorical and without context. As such, I juxtaposed the nation-building models imposed on Iraq by the British during the Mandate Period with the Anglo-American occupation post-2003. I argued that both models were top-down, unrepresentative, and underpinned by Orientalist perceptions of Iraqi society. The second aim of this chapter was to use a Subaltern/history from below approach to re-tell the story of Iraq by re-inserting those who were excluded. I problematized the state-building model imposed by Iraqi leaders, focusing primarily on the Ba'ath Party under Saddam Hussein (1979-2003) to highlight some of the most violent moments of this period, including the denaturalization of the Shi'a during the Iran-Iraq War and the *Anfal* campaign to re-tell the story from the perspective of the marginalized. However, I also problematized the erasure of others by highlighting the marginalization, dispossession, and exclusion of *vulnerable* minorities such as Assyrians, Yazidis, Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkomans and others. I also argued that it is important to examine the process by which these communities were made vulnerable minorities.

In this study, I argued that all states function within an international structure; the system enables or constrains states' behaviour, depending on their political and economic position. Accordingly, and in response to the conventional literature, which pointed to perceived internal deficiencies of Iraq and Iraqi society as the reason for its inability to democratize and stabilize, I sought to explore what went wrong in Iraq using an international, regional and domestic lens. Each of these lenses were the basis of a chapter in this study.

Chapter three aimed to challenge the predominant idea in conventional narratives that answered the question of why Iraq failed to democratize by beginning with *post*-2003 Iraq, meaning after the occupation. By contrast, this chapter began with the period prior to the invasion in order to problematize the invasion itself as the root cause of what "went wrong." As such this chapter highlighted the role played by three interrelated factors, which together, pushed for an invasion of Iraq: neoliberal interventionist and neoconservative organizations and individuals; the Bush administration; and America's national defense strategy. Specifically, I critically analyzed the PNAC's Report, which argues for a shift from *deterrence* to *compellence* to ensure that security threats such as Iraq were prevented from threatening American interests. I also linked neoliberal intervention with theories of state-building. Drawing on postcolonial approaches, I situated the theoretical underpinnings of these to the process of knowledge production. I argued that the concepts of modernity and progress have been taken for granted as "Western constructs," rendering Other societies as "traditional" and in need of "modernizing" or "democratizing" or "development." I challenged these notions by arguing that democracy or progress are universal concepts that are particular to their political, historical, economic and cultural contexts. I critically examined the RAND Report, which provided policy recommendations for "nation-building" in post-invasion Iraq in order to demonstrate that theory and practice are inextricably intertwined. I argued that Orientalist ideas about Iraqi society by American policymakers helped shape dangerous policies such as the decision to invade Iraq and then erroneous and disastrous policies during the occupation to "democratize" Iraq.

Using a critical discourse analysis, chapter three also examined the State of the Union Addresses made by President Bush during the years of 2001-2008. I juxtaposed the "Official" narrative of the invasion with the findings of the Chilcot Report in 2016 to demonstrate the way

in which inconsistent, inaccurate, fabricated and exaggerated "evidence" was used to construct Iraq as a security threat to facilitate a policy of regime change. I also noted a significant pattern in the analysis of the Addresses: the period between 2001 and 2003, focused primarily on national security. This means that during this period, Iraq was constructed as an *imminent* security threat, which can only be prevented through military invasion. However, the period between 2004 and 2008, shifted the discourse from "security" to "democracy promotion" and "liberation" of the Iraqi people. The third factor I critically examined using a discourse analysis was the Official defense strategy as outlined in the NSS. Similar to the other factors analyzed in this chapter this Document advocated for a global promotion of values such as "liberty" and "democracy." I contextually historicized violence in the international system using critical postcolonial approaches and argued that American violence must be situated as violence, regardless of American declarations of maintaining peace and security. Finally, this chapter made the link between democracy promotion in the international system and "neoliberalization." I cited the Bremer Orders implemented by the CPA in 2003 which included, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, creating a conducive environment for foreign investment at the expense of the Iraqi economy and unrestricted foreign patriation of profits. Other Orders concerned de-nationalizing the banking sector, implementing a flat tax and liberalizing trade. Drawing on the work of critical Iraqi scholars, I argued that the neoliberalization of Iraq served American interests rather than "democratized" Iraq.

Chapter four sought to provide a counter-story to the conventional narrative of what "went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq by shifting the *loci of enunciation* from the conventional voices that had been preponderant to Iraqis using a decolonial/history from below theoretical approach. Challenging the Orientalist idea that democracy is exclusive to the West and must be

"transferred" to the non-West, this chapter began with Iraqi *articulations* of democracy. I found these to be consistent with definitions of democracy across the globe; most research participants emphasized elections, stability, inclusion, choice, basic necessities and self governance. These articulations are also evident during the numerous mass protests in post-2003 Iraq, which opposed sectarianism, corruption, and the governments' failure to provide security and services.

The next section of this chapter focused on problematizing the top-down, unrepresentative nature of the nation-building model imposed on post-2003 Iraq. I argued that this process was largely undemocratic because of two interrelated aspects of the Anglo-American model of state-building: the unrepresentative Interim Governing Council made up largely of exiles and the policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army. I highlighted the way in which most of the research participants were opposed to the characterization of these occupation policies as "democratic nation-building" and argued that instead, these policies were designed to install a puppet regime and not democracy. Both, the IGC and the occupation policies of de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army, were underpinned by the Orientalist sectarian lens of the coalition forces. This was not lost on the research participants who all pointed to the occupation's role in the *sectarianization* of Iraq, which challenges the conventional narrative that Iraq was *inherently* sectarian. This was the major factor posited by the research participants in their response to why Iraq had failed to democratize. This is why most of the participants viewed the violence as a systematic, structural problem resulting from the invasion and occupation but also a direct result of the power and security vacuum created by the invasion, which allowed for groups like Al Qaeda to take hold in Iraq. Most importantly, while all the research participants viewed the ruling elites as "sectarian," they were very much in

opposition to the sectarianization of Iraqi politics. This points to the gap between the political

ruling elites and Iraqi peoples' desires, which I elaborate on in the concluding remarks.

Chapter five examined the emergence of ISIS as the only regional factor to answer the

question of what "went wrong" in pst-2003 Iraq because it continues to have a profound impact

on Iraqi politics, society, and demographics. However, I also argued that its rise is also a

reflection of the detrimental effects of the Anglo-American occupation, corrupt and sectarianism

of Iraqi elites, such as Nouri Al Maliki, and the proxy war in Syria. In this way, the rise of ISIS,

while very much originating within a specific post-2003 Iraqi context, speaks to all three levels

of analysis used in this study: the international, the domestic and the regional.

The first section outlined the conventional approaches used to understand the emergence

of ISIS. First, there was the familiar and previously discussed neo-Orientalist discourse depicting

ISIS as typical of Islamic movements and deeply rooted within Islamic tradition. I problematized

this discourse as a reiteration of much of the discourse previously discussed in conventional

explanations of Iraq's inability to democratize; namely, the idea that Arabs or in this case,

Muslims are exceptional to democracy and relatedly, that they are fueled by inherent sectarian

animosities, which necessarily and inevitably result in violence. A second understanding of ISIS

that I highlighted was the idea that Saddam Hussein and Bashar Al Assad produced ISIS. I

posited that this argument is ahistorical, inaccurate, and ignores the devastating impact of the

Anglo-American occupation of Iraq. The next argument outlined in this chapter was ISIS as a

revolutionary state. I used Adib-Moghaddam's response to this argument as an example of a

critical and historically contextual analysis which takes the conditions of the people on the

ground as its point of departure. Lastly, I highlighted the argument that ISIS is completely

devoid of religious context, which is evidently made within the context of a very real

Islamophobic post-9/11 world. However, I argued that it is possible to pay attention to those suffering, especially on the terms they are understanding their suffering, without falling into a culturalist, narrow and Orientalist discourse.

The next section of the chapter sought to contextualize the rise of ISIS and other militant movements in the region within a larger theoretical context for the use of political violence in the international system. Drawing on critical postcolonial scholarship, this section argued that a reciprocal relationship between "us" and "them" is necessary to understanding the geo-historical context embedded within neocolonialism and imperialism. This was particularly posited as a challenge to the Orientalist idea that violence is inherent to societies in the Middle East without a consideration for the violence perpetrated by foreign colonial powers. I used the work of critical Middle East scholars such as Abu Rabi' and Mahdavi to understand Islamism as a product of local, national, and international factors within a particular social and economic colonial context. I also used the work of scholars such as Alnasseri to argue that understanding the violence in Iraq without the context of the occupation is problematic. This ignores the effects of the institutionalization of sectarianism in Iraq and the conditions which gave rise to movements such as ISIS and its ideology.

This chapter used a critical postcolonial theoretical approach to examine three interrelated factors, which gave rise to ISIS. First, I highlighted the regional influence of the extremist ideologies of Wahhabism/Salafism and the elective affinity between the hegemonic forces in the West and elements of militant Islamism in a number of cases in the Middle East, such as the *Mujahedeen* in Afghanistan and the militant Islamists in Syria. The most important factor in the rise of ISIS is the second, which was the Anglo-American invasion and occupation. I cited the security and power vacuum left by the US invasion as a factor, which opened the

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border to Al Qaeda to establish a base in Iraq under the leadership of Zarqawi in 2003. I also argued that the collective punishments and detention of Iraqis in the coalition and Iraqi government's fight against "terrorism" resulted in oppressing a genuine Iraqi resistance to a foreign occupation and in *radicalizing* elements of Iraqi society, which fueled the insurgency. For instance, the abuses and torture of Iraqis in Abu Ghraib and the detention of Iraqis in camps like Bucca, allowed Iraqis like Baghdadi to organize and radicalize with Al Qaeda militants. These "mistakes" were compounded by disastrous occupation policies such as de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army, which left Iraqis disenfranchised. Finally, the sectarian policies of the Al Maliki government, which fuelled the perception that the Shi'a were the beneficiaries of the New Iraq. The Al Maliki government's failure to respond to social demands for security, basic services and calls for the end of sectarianism also fuelled this sentiment. Tensions were also escalated and deepened when Al Maliki responded with violence to protests in Sunni-majority areas of Samarra, Diyalah and Kirkuk, which served to strengthen ISIS' stronghold.

This chapter lastly highlighted the role of regional politics and the proxy war in Syria as a contributing factor to the emergence of ISIS. I pointed to the regional rivalry between Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and their respective allies and problematized the conventional sectarian analysis. I acknowledged that there are real differences between these religious sects, especially since these realities have had a decade to coagulate. However, I argued that it is the *politicization* of these identities that gives them meaning. Ironically, it is the politicization of these religious identities in the context of power politics and states' regional rivalry, which serves to *de-politicize* what is happening in Iraq and the region by focusing solely on culture or religion. In the case of Turkey, I also highlighted their fears of a strengthened separatist Kurdish movement,

which led to their support for militant Islamists in Syria who were fighting the Kurdish YPG. This is due to the sizable Kurdish population in Turkey and the struggle between the PKK and the Turkish state. While it was not the focus of this study, I also highlighted the importance of the proxy war in Syria to understanding ISIS in Iraq. I argued that the Syrian war has turned into a proxy war between two camps: the Syrian government and its allies – Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, China and the West and its regional allies, including militant Salafists and Al Qaeda in Syria. It is this link with militant Islamists such as Al Qaeda and then ISIS, which makes the Syrian case relevant to understanding ISIS in post-2003 Iraq.

6.3 Mosul Operations: Applications of This Research

The Western media has been quick to report on operations in Mosul with a focus on sectarian concerns, which is the standard lens through which Iraq has been viewed from the beginning of the war in 2003. *The New Yorker's* Dexter Filkins, writes, "if the Fallujah offensive is any guide, the use of Shiite militias in Mosul could be disastrous…once the militias were in the area, they began carrying out summary executions – shooting suspected ISIS members on the spot."[1023] Like most conventional narratives, Filkins attributes sectarianism and the rise of ISIS to a natural characteristic of Iraqi society; he writes, "as most readers know, the American invasion in 2003 was followed by a horrific sectarian war, which killed tens of thousands of people and gave birth to the group that later became ISIS."[1024] In *Chapter Two*, I challenged the idea that "sectarianism" is inherent in Iraqi society. Iraq is indeed a multi-sect and multi-national state but that does not necessarily mean Iraqis are inherently *sectarian*, whereby their sectarian identity (and the definition of sect as implied by this concept is itself problematic) trumps all

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[1023] Filkins, "The Dangers of the Iraqi Coalition Headed Toward Mosul," 2016.
[1024] Ibid.

other aspects of their identity and inevitably results in violence because they cannot "get along."

Drawing on the work of scholars such as Haddad and Khoury, I argued that sectarian *relations* is

a more useful concept, because it highlights the role of historical context, especially factors such

as foreign intervention, economic competition or state-building which might facilitate a strict

sectarian identity and exacerbate strife and tension (which is what happened in post-2003 Iraq) or

a loose sectarian affiliation and induce cooperation and tolerance. I also argued that an

understanding of the processes by which sectarian, ethnic and racial identities are *politicized* by

both elites and the state are vital in order to understand contemporary Iraqi politics.

The Western media has not been alone in discussing "sectarianism" in relation to the lead

up to the operations in Mosul. Recently, a blog post by Juan Cole, a Middle East expert located

at the University of Michigan, incited a Twitter debate between Cole and Iraqi experts, including

Zaid Al-Ali, Fanar Haddad, Abbas Kadhim and Hayder al-Khoei. In his post, Cole labelled what

should have been Iraqi security forces, as "Shiite forces," at which point Iraqi experts responded

by problematizing his use of sectarian labels. Accused of sectarian, inflammatory and inaccurate

analysis, Cole defended his position by pointing to the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad

and the Iraqi army. Haddad responds to this in an article, which appeared in *Jadaliyya*: he writes,

"there has been a strange ubiquity and persistence about the sect-coding of all things Iraqi since

2003. Thirteen years after regime change, even some of the world's most esteemed academics

can casually refer to the Iraqi army as 'Shi'a forces.'"[1025] Moreover, Haddad argues that sect-

coding is a "value judgement on the legitimacy of the post-2003 Iraqi state…the national is

generally viewed if not equated with legitimacy, legality, and modernity. As such, to sect-code a

government or arm of the state is to de-nationalize and hence delegitimize it."[1026] While Haddad

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[1025] Haddad "Shia Forces, Iraqi Army and the Perils of Sect-Coding," 2016.
[1026] Haddad "Shia Forces, Iraqi Army and the Perils of Sect-Coding," 2016.

is careful in his analysis and recognizes the entrenchment of sectarianism in the post-2003 Iraqi state, he warns of the consequences of careless sect-coding by academics and political analysts.

This type of analysis is also problematic in terms of failing to historicize or contextualize the rise of ISIS. Without problematizing the American invasion, Filkins reports, a "horrific sectarian war" ensued. In *Chapter Three* I showed the importance of challenging the decision to invade, the theoretical and practice of "state-building," "intervention," and "democratic promotion" in the international system. Glossing over the invasion to discuss the "sectarian war" ignores the very problematic and dangerous consequences of the invasion and occupation policies. In *Chapter Four*, I focused on Iraqi articulations – enunciations of their social and political realities with the interrelated aims of problematizing the elite-driven nation-building process and countering this story by providing an Iraqi perspective. Understanding Iraqi perceptions of the political process and their ruling elites is important; there is little hope of defeating the *ideology* of groups like ISIS if those in power are not careful in avoiding repeated mistakes, negligence and incompetence. One of the most important insights gained from the semi-structured interviews and from critical Iraqi scholars' work was that rather than building a "democracy," the occupation and its policies served to do the opposite – the destruction of the Iraqi state. The question of "why did Iraq fail?" is misleading without considering the invasion and occupation policies and their ramifications. For most Iraqis, the government was undemocratic, unrepresentative, unaccountable and unreflective of Iraqis themselves. Complete chaos and an atmosphere of unrestrained violence characterized the post-2003 period. The failure to hold criminals accountable, even under the watchful eye of the Americans, was a large factor in maintaining this environment.

In terms of the emergence of groups such as ISIS, *Chapter Five* discussed in length the role of the Anglo-American invasion and occupation policies. Specifically, I argued the arbitrary detainment and confinement of Iraqis labelled as "insurgents" and/or suspected of "terrorism" served to radicalize ordinary Iraqis. Related to this was the lack of security, rampant unfettered violence by sectarian militias that entered Iraq through the invasion, and the neoliberalization of the Iraqi economy, which all created a conducive environment for radical ideologies of groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Most damaging of the occupation policies was the de-Ba'athification of Iraq and the disbanding of the Iraqi army, which resulted in a highly disenfranchised population, a significant portion of which were highly trained military personnel.

In addition to these factors, regional politics also played a significant role; namely, the ideologies exported by countries, such as Saudi Arabia, seeking to destabilize the *perceived* influence of Iran in Iraq, the interests of regional powers such as Iran and Turkey, and the events in Syria. Contemporary regional politics persist in playing a role in the Mosul Operations. Continuing to make reference to Turkey's "brothers and relatives" in Iraq in order to justify Turkish interference, Erdogan maintained, "we will be in the operation and we will be at the table…It is out of the question that we are not involved."[1027] While Turkey is largely concerned with the involvement of Iraqi-Shiite and perceived anti-Turkish Kurdish militia, Baghdad has made it clear that the presence of Turkish troops in Bashiqa, north of Mosul is not welcome.[1028]

At a time when liberating the people living under ISIS occupation should be the primary concern, the Iraqi elites are busy fighting over what forces should go into Mosul and under whose control liberated villages will come under afterwards. In other words, disputes over land and ethno-religious identity are very much alive. Throughout this work, I have challenged

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[1027] Daily Star Lebanon, "Erdogan says Turkey to take part in Mosul Operation," 2016.
[1028] Ibid.

"sectarianism" and the narrative that Iraq is inherently sectarian, violent and incapable of unity and stability. However, all critical Iraqi scholars do recognize the reality on the ground today. That is, after thirteen years of the *sectarianization* of the Iraqi state, *perceived* sectarian relations are a real issue that must be taken into consideration when exercising power, making decisions or analyzing Iraq. In a recent article in *Al Jazeera,* Zaid Al-Ai, cautions, "put in crude, sectarian terms, many local Sunnis will assume that their city was purposely reduced to rubble by Shi'a-led forces to punish them and possibly even encourage them to leave and never return."[1029] We have seen this sort of narrative exploited by political elites and very easily believed by people on the ground; Al-Ali writes, "in the context of a near-total absence of government oversight, regular and irregular forces have looted people's homes, tortured and sometimes even executed detainees over the past two years, often well after ISIL forces on the ground were defeated."[1030] More problematically, there has been nearly no accountability for those responsible for these types of abuses, which have been very well documented.[1031] In the perception of Iraqis, Al-Ali reminds us, this makes it almost irrelevant that this type of behaviour does not represent the overall conduct of the security service. In the past, "the Iraqi government has responded to allegations of abuse either by not reacting at all or by downplaying the damage caused and its significance."[1032] Considering Sunni alienation was partially responsible for the rise of ISIS to gain a stronghold in Mosul, the government in Baghdad needs to seriously respond to allegations of "sectarianism" if they hope to quell this sectarian narrative.

[1029] Al-Ali, "Can Iraq Defeat ISIL Without Destroying Mosul?" 2016.
[1030] Ibid.
[1031] See Amnesty International Report "Punished for Daesh's Crimes: Displaced Iraqis Abused by Militias and Government Forces," 2016.
[1032] Al-Ali, "Can Iraq Defeat ISIL Without Destroying Mosul?" 2016.

The issue of territorial control over disputed territories and influence has also been a major concern since 2003, especially between the power blocs. ISIS forces are vastly outnumbered by a coalition of "an estimated 30,000 Iraqi army troops, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, Shi'a militias and Sunni tribal forces"[1033] along with smaller Yezidi and Assyrian militias formed after the emergence of ISIS. However, the significant tension between these groups and their various interests make this an even more complicated operation. An important question seems to be what happens after Mosul is recaptured? The question of ISIS's ideology notwithstanding, it is important to consider Faisal Al Yafai's assertion that "getting rid of ISIL from Mosul is only part of the problem – it is a symptom rather than the root cause. Without a genuinely representative government in Baghdad, a victory in Mosul will only be temporary."[1034] So far, the central government has been unable, or in the perception of many Iraqis, unwilling to provide security for its ordinary citizens. ISIS and other sectarian militias know this. Zaid Al-Ali makes a powerful argument in his *Al Jazeera* piece for electoral reform in order to ensure the lawless vacuum which gave rise to ISIS is filled. He argues, "if the only path to establishing security and the rule of law in Iraq is through parliamentary reform, then the only avenue of opportunity for genuine reform is to replace the current parliamentarians in the 2018 elections."[1035] The corruption, negligence and general incompetence of the central government in Baghdad has been discussed at length throughout this work, especially in chapter four where I focused on Iraqi perceptions of their political elites.

Mosul and the surrounding villages being liberated are, contrary to the conventional discourse, heterogeneous in ethnic make-up and are home to some of the most vulnerable

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[1033] Al Jazeera, "Mosul: Iraqi General Calls for ISIL Fighters' Surrender," 2016.
[1034] Al Yafai, "The Day After Mosul is Free, Iraq Must Face Some Hard Truths," 2016.
[1035] Al Ali, "Can Iraq Defeat ISIL Without Destroying Mosul?" 2016.

minorities in Iraq such as Assyrians, Yazidis, Turkomans, Shabak and Mandaeans. As the world watches and celebrates Iraqi forces and Peshmerga forces, these vulnerable minorities have, for the first time, picked up arms due to their lack of faith in both these security forces to protect them. Behnam Abboush tells *Reuters* reporters about his experiences in August 2014, approximately two months after the occupation of Mosul, when "Kurdish forces stationed in the Christian town of Karakosh suddenly announced they were fleeing."[1036] Similarly, in my interview with a Yazidi activist in Erbil, Iraq, I was told by Ali Khalaf, that the Peshmerga, despite telling Yazidis to disarm and promising to protect Yazidi villages, fled when ISIS moved in, which led to the enslavement of approximately 3,000 Yazidi women and girls.[1037] Abboush, echoing what many in Mosul and surrounding areas feel, says, "if there was a strong central government we would need nothing."[1038] Khisro Goran, a Kurdish member of Iraq's parliament concedes, "I agree that minorities from Yazidis, Christians or Shabak should have their own local police to protect their societies and this is the ideal way to resolve a trust issue."[1039] It is true that trust between these communities is limited and a contentious issue; however, Iraq's security will not be resolved if each community arms itself. In effect, these sectarian and ethnic militias serve to further fragment the Iraqi state, although the political conditions which gave rise to them is noted.

The distrust does not end with the issue of who will liberate Mosul. Many of these minorities are caught in the middle of territorial disputes between the central government and the KRG. While in the 2006 draft of the Constitution, the KRG made no claims for Nineveh, these claims for a "greater Kurdistan" have been made in the 2009 draft of the Constitution under the

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[1036] Dehghanpisheh and Gregory, "Iraq's Traumatized Minorities: A Test of Unity after Mosul Offensive," 2016.
[1037] Ali Khalaf, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 14, 2016.
[1038] Dehghanpisheh and Gregory, "Iraq's Traumatized Minorities: A Test of Unity after Mosul Offensive," 2016.
[1039] Ibid.

leadership of President Masoud Barzani.[1040] This claim is rooted within a decade of power

politics in Iraq, beginning with the Sunni boycott of Iraqi elections in 2005, which resulted in the

overrepresentation of Kurdish bloc members in the provincial council. These claims over a

bigger territory by the KRG must also be placed in the context of low oil prices, gross

mismanagement, and corruption in the KRG. The Kurds have recently "concluded a deal with

Baghdad to resume oil exports from the disputed city of Kirkuk – a deal widely thought to hinge

on Kurdish cooperation against IS. Remove ISIL and the Kurds' leverage goes too."[1041] Aside

from these complications, the state's ability and commitment to providing security, especially for

those who are inside Mosul and surrounding areas will be a test to Iraq's viability.

6.4 Contribution of Research

In the context of the recent events in Iraq, I have summarized the major arguments made

throughout this research. This section highlights this study's contributions to the critical study of

Iraq, the Middle East, political science and IR, nation-building and democratization, and critical

postcolonial studies. This research's ontological contribution is rooted in its overarching finding

that the invasion and occupation were inherently incapable of "democratic nation-building" in

post-2003 Iraq. In this way, this study is an addition to the growing critical analyses by Iraqi

scholars on post-invasion Iraq.

Theoretically, this study suggests that a universal top-down democratic model imposed

through military force is not only limited but catastrophic for the people at the receiving end of

such models. Relatedly, this one-size-fits all model's limitations further substantiate decolonial

scholarship's call for a geo-historically situated knowledge. The case of Iraq strongly suggests

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[1040] Joseph, "After Mosul: Securing the Future of Iraq's Assyrians," 2016.
[1041] Al Yafai, "The Day After Mosul is Free, Iraq Must Face Some Hard Truths," 2016.

the importance of locally produced knowledges and the need for grassroots, inclusive, "home-grown" solutions. The limitations of colonial models are evident in the conventional scholarship's problematic "solutions" for the perceived challenges faced by occupying powers. One of the reasons its solutions did not work is their problematic epistemological and ontological foundations. That is, the conventional literature's foundational basis – that Iraq is sectarian and only an ethno-sectarian governing structure can maintain Iraq's territorial integrity post-Saddam – was Orientalist and inaccurate. More importantly, this assumption about Iraqi society along with the colonial assumption that people in the Global South require intervention and democratization resulted in the exclusion of Iraqis from the state-building project after the invasion.

In sum, conventional literature on post-war Iraq failed to problematize the invasion and its effects on Iraq, and what it meant for the international system, international law and norms. Conventional literature also focused primarily on a top-down process of democratization and nation-building, as well as the role of political elites which were seen by Iraqis as unrepresentative, and mostly corrupt. Analyses of Iraq have also focused on the fragmentation of Iraq, "sectarianism" and inter-communal violence without problematizing the role of the invasion and occupation in entrenching this system of governance. American foreign policy was and continues to be focused on funding, training and working closely with these major factions' leaders, which as discussed in chapter four, are largely disconnected from everyday Iraqis who do not support them or feel represented by them.

Conversely, critical scholarship and this study's point of departure for understanding "what went wrong" in post-2003 Iraq is the invasion and occupation. This position is partly decolonial because it begins with a perspective from the "Other" rather than what we think we

know about Iraq. The importance of focusing on the oppressed, in this case, Iraqis, instead of unrepresentative elites is powerfully articulated by Lilia Monzo,[1042] who is drawing on the work of Freire.[1043] She argues, that the oppressed have "insights into the nature of oppression that are necessarily hidden from the dominant group. Thus, the participation of non-dominant groups in the decision-making of our society is a critical component of advancing democracy."[1044] One of the major driving forces behind my intellectual commitment to focus on *people* in my research was to challenge this conventional approach and to contribute to the literature on a critical study of contemporary Iraq. In this study, I have demonstrated a more inclusive, grassroots, bottom-up approach to democratization, which has the potential to substantially change the way we think about "democratic nation-building."

Part of this subaltern position is possible because of my ability to access primary Arabic documents and other Arabic sources, which allowed me to provide a more nuanced and *Iraqi* articulation of post-2003 Iraq. Primary sources help the subject to represent itself partially but with more nuance, which complicates what has been made simple by non-Arabic speaking researchers and policymakers writing about the Middle East using assumptions accumulated by "knowing" the region and its people as it has been filtered through colonial archives, knowledges and Western media. A knowledge of one of the region's languages does not provide a complete picture; all our knowledge is partial. However, it is potentially closer to the realities on "the ground." To represent oneself, and to tell one's story is an incredibly powerful experience and while I could not conduct ethnographic research inside a war-torn Iraq, I was able to use modern

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[1042] Monzo, "A Critical Pedagogy for Democracy: Confronting Higher Education's Neoliberal Agenda with a Critical Latina Feminist Episteme," 2014.

[1043] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 2005.

[1044] Monzo, "A Critical Pedagogy for Democracy: Confronting Higher Education's Neoliberal Agenda with a critical Latina Feminist Episteme," 80.

technology to access some of these people. To that end, I also made great effort to predominantly use the work of Iraqi scholars, especially those who are well connected to Iraqis on the ground. And lastly, my own experiences as an Iraqi and a refugee, my social and grassroots activism for decades in southern Ontario with Iraqi and Assyrian organizations inside Iraq and abroad, as well as my employment experience working with Iraqi refugees in 2009-2011 gave me great insight, which even if not directly referenced in this work, has most definitely influenced my thinking about Iraq.

The shift in loci of enunciation in this study also suggests greater need to consider the role of outside hegemonic imperial powers in Iraq and the region in general as opposed to the conventional "state/nation building" approach, which begins its analysis *after* the use of force. This study emphasized the need to problematize the decision to invade and occupy a sovereign state both for security reasons and democracy promotion. This alternative starting point for analysis challenges the use of violence by a great power in the system and contextualizes the case of Iraq as one of many instances of imperial aggression and intervention in the region such as Syria, Libya and Afghanistan, to name some contemporary examples. These cases of intervention have important lessons for great powers, the most fundamental of which is democracy and freedom cannot be imposed through the use of military force. Drawing on critical Iraqi scholars and voices, this study has demonstrated the necessary inclusion of grassroots and local knowledge and expertise in building and consolidating a plural, inclusive and potentially democratic governing system and institutions. More importantly, it has shown the devastating effects of sectarianization, which effectively divide society and produce violent and disintegrating results.

The reality of the unequal power relations and distribution of wealth in the international system are powerful explanatory factors for the many cases of imperial intervention in the Middle East. This is why a shift in the loci of enunciation must be accompanied with a political project of emancipation on an international level in order to substantially change the current order, which offers political and economic incentives to the hegemon to intervene in a geo-strategic resource-rich region such as the Middle East. The uprisings that swept the region in 2011 are concrete challenges to the idea of Arab or Muslim exceptionalism to democracy or change. They are also as Alnasseri argues, a result of the "structural limitation of the current structure of power: crisis of power-cold war liberal democracy and neoliberal imperialism insofar as they have proven themselves incapable of presenting and serving the demands of the popular classes."[1045] While these revolts depict popular sentiments in the region, the case of Syria, as discussed in chapter five, shows how the domestic politics of a geostrategic state are disrupted and exacerbated by interventions from foreign powers.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research

This research, like all research, is incomplete and is limited in its ability to tell the entire story of post-2003 Iraq. All research comes from a particular perspective, which means that diverse perspectives are more likely to tell us a complete story. There is much left for future research. Particularly, it is very important to conduct ethnographic research when it is possible in order to truly gain Iraqi perspectives or Iraqi enunciations of the events under study. The plural here is conscious; there is no single entity that is Iraq (this is true of all states) and all its diverse entities must be incorporated equitably for a pluralist and "democratic" Iraq to emerge.

[1045] Alnasseri, "Introduction," 3.

Relatedly, it is important to focus on Subalterns or the margins of Iraqi society. Chapter two very briefly attempted to re-insert those who have been largely erased from the story of Iraq, both before and after 2003. This requires much more nuance and serious engagement with each of those communities, in order to truly re-insert them into the story of Iraq. Finally, while this work has highlighted the KRG and its politics when relevant, further research is required to shed light on and contextualize the relationship between Baghdad and the KRG in post-2003 Iraq. The question of Kurdish independence will continue to be an important one for both Baghdad and the minorities in the area, especially the Yazidis and Assyrians whose claims for indigeneity have been historically in opposition to Kurdish nationalism and vice versa. This is also important for neighbouring states such as Iran, Syria and Turkey who also have sizable Kurdish and Assyrian populations vying for their political rights and in Kurdish cases, self-determination. Future work related to this question must begin with an understanding of the region, and a historical context for these claims as well as with the acknowledgement that the northern region of Iraq, much like other regions in Iraq and other states, is not homogenously Kurdish. This seems like an obvious statement, but it has often ignored the number of vulnerable minorities living inside the KRG, and on whose lands Kurdish land claims are made.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

The recent push to recapture Mosul has brought forward one of the biggest questions plaguing the Iraqi state since 2003: *can Iraq be put back together?* Al Yafai contents, "for all the feel-good cooperation of Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds (note the sole focus on the major blocs) liberating Mosul, there is profound mistrust between the communities. The end of ISIL will only

bring them to the surface."[1046] Al Yafai is not alone; in my interview with prominent Iraqi

scholar, Nadje Al-Ali from SOAS, told me,

> I am not sure that I really see a sort of future for a united Iraq but
> personally to be honest, although for a long time I was very much
> writing against and campaigning against this whole idea that Iraq
> should be fragmented into three parts but right now, I also do not
> think that the main aim is to keep Iraq together. I mean for me I
> feel that the main aim is to somehow stop the violence. Whatever
> it takes.[1047]

I agree that stopping the violence in Iraq, eradicating ISIS and its ideology, implementing

electoral and parliamentary reform, and re-establishing the rule of law are among the most

important things required to stabilize and to re-build Iraq. I also understand and recognize the

steep up-hill climb Iraqis have in order to re-build and reconcile; I have mentioned the distrust

between communities, especially from the perspective of vulnerable minorities who feel

abandoned by the state and their fellow neighbours throughout the period after 2003, and

specifically during the onslaught of ISIS. I have also traced the violence and hostilities between

these groups and looked at the role of political elites and the invasion and occupation. However,

I find it difficult to reach this very taken-for-granted conclusion about the disintegration of Iraq

into three states. When I began this research, I thought it was largely my own personal

experiences and attachments to Iraq, which led to my inability to accept this sort of conclusion.

After conducting this research, reading the work of critical Iraqis, speaking to Iraqi refugees and

interviewing Iraqi experts and scholars, I understand and maintain that *there is a significant*

disconnect between the narrative of political elites in Iraq, conventional media and scholarship,

and everyday Iraqis on the ground. I explored this at great length in chapter four. Iraqis,

especially the younger generations and activists, are very much against the sectarian rhetoric and

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[1046] Al Yafai, "The Day After Mosul is Free, Iraq Must Face Some Hard Truths," 2016.
[1047] Nadje Al-Ali, interview with author. Hamilton, ON (Skype), April 13, 2016.

policies espoused by the government, the corruption, the extremism by various parties and movements. While they face very significant obstacles on the ground, I find it very difficult to dismiss Iraqis' potential to move beyond this.

In *Pedagogy of Freedom,* Paulo Freire outlines a universal human ethic, which he identifies as "something absolutely indispensable for human living and human social intercourse."[1048] He continues, "it is a 'presence,' a 'presence' that is relational to the world and to others…A 'presence' that can reflect upon itself, that knows itself as presence, that can intervene, can transform, can speak of what it does, but that can also take stock of, compare, evaluate, give value to, decide, break with, and dream."[1049] The importance of this concept for me is what it *implies:* "it means that we know ourselves to be *conditioned* but not *determined.* It means recognizing that History is time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined – that the future is *problematic* and not already decided, fatalistically."[1050] Defining neoliberalism as an "immobilizing ideology of fatalism,"[1051] Freire reminds us that it is not natural but an ideology, which tells us "we can do nothing to change the march of social-historical and cultural reality because that is how the world is anyway."[1052] This means that a *focus or emphasis on Iraqi civil society, agency and activism might potentially show us a way forward, which we might miss if were to focus on the political elites.*

The "democratic nation-building" *project* in Iraq, as carried out by the Anglo-American occupation with Iraqi exiles, has failed. I have made this assessment throughout this work. However, it is dangerous when we label the entire state of Iraq as having failed. The former

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[1048] Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom,* 6.
[1049] Ibid., 7.
[1050] Ibid.
[1051] Ibid., 8.
[1052] Ibid., 9.

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implies a hegemonic project, and a top-down process or model; the latter can lead to this "immobilizing ideology of fatalism"[1053] where we miss the potential and ability of Iraqis to provide their own solutions. It is important to note here that it is not up to "us" to figure out a way forward for Iraqis; this is maybe especially true for Iraqis in the diaspora, who often are very attached to the outcomes in Iraq, but need to recognize that they cannot impose solutions onto a state in which they do not live. However, I think while it is important for Iraqis to lead the process of re-building Iraq, they should not be abandoned in this endeavour as if they are solely responsible for the situation they are in. The American government needs to be held accountable for its role in the current situation, and while I am opposed to more direct intervention and "boots on the ground," it is important to pay attention to the demands and needs of Iraqis, as articulated by civil society and experts. Oftentimes, non-intervention is taken to mean complacency by administrators and policy-makers to leave Iraqis to "clean up their own mess." A historicization of the "problems" in post-2003 Iraq require a political, social and economic context, which is rooted in the decision by the world's superpower to invade Iraq as part of its Global War on Terror. Moreover, a critical analysis of the failure of Iraq to "democratize" must also be rooted in the American decision to not only occupy Iraq, but also to destroy the state in order to "build a democracy" (in its neoliberal image). Indeed, the democratization of Iraq without the inclusion of Iraqis would have undoubtedly failed for the simple fact that governing bodies require legitimacy to govern and democracy requires the representation of people's needs and interests.

[1053] Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom,* 2000.

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